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THE CONCEPT OF MILTE

IN THIRTEENTH CENTURY GERMAN LITERATURE:

MEANING AND FUNCTION OF "DER TUGENDE FROUWE"

IN COURTLY SOCIETY

A Dissertation Presented

By

KATHLEEN WEYRICH ROIG

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FOR MY PARENTS,

VINCENT AND MARIAN WEYRICH

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ABSTRACT

The Concept of Milte

in Thirteenth Century German Literature:

Meaning and Function of "Der Tugende Vrouwe"

in Courtly Society

August 1977

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The virtue of milte figures prominently among the many virtues which play a major role in the literature of the courtly period. Its importance is stressed by virtually every writer of the period, and some authors, such as Thomasin von Zerclaere and Bruder Wernher, assign it the highest position in their hierarchy of values. Although literary scholarship has devoted ample attention to other courtly virtues, it has largely neglected milte. Secondary literature related to the "Tugendsystem" makes cursory reference to milte; other secondary works only briefly discuss the meaning and function of milte in courtly society or, at best, give detailed consideration to the role of milte in the works of individual authors. This dissertation analyzes the broad spectrum of meaning with which milte is used by major authors in the principal literary genres of the courtly period; it also considers the role which milte plays in their conception of courtly society.

From the time of its earliest occurrence in Germanic literatures until the courtly period, milte is defined as an aristocratic virtue

with three basic connotations: an attitude of loving care and concern for one's subjects or one's fellow man, mercy or compassion, and above all generosity. Prior to the courtly period there is no reflection on the meaning of milte and its role in society; whenever the word appears, its meaning and function are simply taken for granted. If an individual gives liberally, he is regarded as milte, regardless of the intentions which underlie his generosity.

As writers in all genres of the courtly period begin to concern themselves with a clearer articulation of the aspirations of their times, they carefully examine, define and redefine the various courtly virtues. Although they continue to use milte with its traditional connotations, they come to equate it above all with "rîcher muot", i.e., with the attitude, will or predisposition to act nobly and generously. Thus milte is no longer viewed as an act but as an attitude, and the intention of the giver rather than his action determines whether he is truly liberal. From this definition it follows that even the impoverished individual who has nothing to give can be regarded as milte if he is noble and generous of spirit. Likewise, a distinction is made between giving "von reht", i.e., giving what one is legally and justly bound to give, and giving "nâch rehte", i.e., giving for the sake of generosity above and beyond all legal obligations.

Courtly authors stress the role which milte is meant to play in society. On an individual level, milte brings honor to the generous individual; it also serves to express love and to foster the bond of friendship. On a larger scale, milte enhances life in society by

making it pleasant. When it is exercised by a ruler, it brings honor to his land and enriches the lives of his subjects.

The authors of the period repeatedly contrast milte to its antithesis, the vice of greed, which is by its very nature cold, destructive and insatiable. They also stress the relationship of milte to êre, insisting that the man who lacks the attribute of "rîcher muot" lacks honor as well.

The courtly concept of milte is intricately related to the society which created and fostered it. It slowly disappears from the language as the new money economy replaces natural economy, as the cities become more important than the courts, and as authors increasingly direct their works to a non-courtly audience which seems more interested in practical considerations of life than in an ideal concept such as milte.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The interpretation of medieval German literature, and particularly of the literature of the courtly period, depends to a large extent upon a correct understanding of certain concepts which are central to medieval thought. The concepts of triuwe, mâze and êre, for example, have been the subject of numerous scholarly investigations precisely because they are three of the most highly-cherished courtly concepts and because their importance is repeatedly stressed in all genres of courtly literature. Although these terms have undergone a tremendous transformation from the time of their earliest occurrence in the Middle Ages to the present, their New High German equivalents still convey significant aspects of the medieval meanings.[1] But the concept of milte, which also plays a central role in medieval thought, vanishes almost entirely from the German language by the New High German period.[2]

The word milte is used both as an adjective and as a substantive in the medieval period. We find two definitions of its New High German equivalent, mild, in the Duden: "lau; angenehm; nicht rauh" and "sanft, nachsichtig; Verständnis habend" (Der Grosse Duden, Vol. X, p. 440). The former meaning has only a remote connection with the medieval definition; the latter meaning, however, comes somewhat closer to the medieval definition, since consideration and understanding are indeed inherent in the nature of milte. The meaning of the New High German substantive Milde is essentially the same as that of the adjective; hence it does not furnish additional material for comparison.

But the adjective mildtätig reveals two further aspects of the medieval meaning of milte. Mildtätig is defined as "bereit, etwas Gutes zu tun; freigebig" (Der Grosse Duden, Vol. X). Milte is synonymous with generosity in the works of a number of medieval authors; and for some, such as Hartmann von Aue and Thomasin von Zerclaere, it also connotes a readiness or willingness to do good or to be generous even if one lacks the economic means to do so.

The fact remains, however, that these New High German definitions reveal only a fraction of the rich, complex and highly sophisticated meaning of milte as it is used in medieval times, and especially in the courtly period. We must ask why milte loses so much of its earlier richness and import. Is the concept so intricately related to the thought of the times in which it becomes a central concern that it does not outlive those times? In other words, is milte, like minne, a distinctly courtly concept which vanishes with the decline of the courtly period? Or is it in some way bound to the system of natural economy so that it is destined to gradually disappear as the new money economy becomes the prevalent economic system? We will deal with these questions in a later chapter.

In addition to asking why milte eventually becomes obsolete, we must also ask why no study of the concept exists. There has been much discussion of the knightly "system" of virtue ever since Gustav Ehrismann wrote his famous article on the subject.[3] Ehrismann acknowledges that milte and reht are duties of noblemen and lords according to Thomasin, and that milte is the most important lordly virtue for

Walther.[4] While it is true that milte is essentially an aristocratic virtue, much more could be said about its nature than what is found in secondary literature related to the "Tugendsystem". To a large extent, subsequent research debates the existence of an actual "system" of virtue and the place of the various virtues within such a system rather than dealing with the precise meaning of the individual virtues themselves.

In secondary literature which is not related to the "Tugendsystem" we find only brief discussions of the meaning and function of milte in courtly society, or, at best, more detailed considerations of the role which milte plays in the works of individual authors. Helmut DeBoor, for example, makes a profound statement about the way in which milte is perceived by authors of the thirteenth century when he remarks that

> . . . milte ist Frucht der Ehre, ersprießt aus dem Verpflichtungsbewußtsein des Reichen und Mächtigen, eine Welt des Edlen, Schönen und Geistigen um sich zu erwecken und zu erhalten, Besitz in Segen zu verwandeln.[5]

DeBoor provides a fitting metaphorical definition of milte and aptly describes the role which this virtue should play in courtly society. Can we assume, however, that his statement is the sum total of what can be said about the topic? How, precisely, is milte linked to the concept of honor, and how is it part of the functioning of society at that time?

Similarly, Günter Eifler's work, Die Ethischen Anschauungen in 'Freidanks Bescheidenheit', provides us with a thorough and accurate treatment of the meaning and function of milte as perceived by Frei-

dank.[6] Eifler observes that Freidank defines milte as an inner attitude or predisposition rather than as the concrete action of generosity. He also notes that within the context of Freidank's work, milte is said to foster and perpetuate the bond of friendship and to bring fame and honor to the land of the ruler who possesses this attribute. But Eifler's excellent analysis raises an important question which subsequent scholarship has left unanswered. To what degree are Freidank's pronouncements on milte unique, and to what degree do they correspond to the pronouncements of other authors of the courtly period? In other words, do the authors of the period share a common understanding of the meaning and function of milte, or do we find substantial differences as we move from genre to genre and from the early to the late works of courtly literature?

In order to arrive at a clear understanding of milte as it is used by individual authors of the courtly period, we must turn to their writings. There we can see the meaning which they ascribe to milte as well as the role which they believe it should play in courtly society. A survey of the meaning and usage of the word in Germanic literature from its earliest occurrence to precourtly times and a comparison of those meanings and usages to those of the courtly period can best serve as a starting point in our search for the answers to the questions which we have posed.

The word milte appears in all early Germanic languages. Its earliest usage can be found in Ulfilas' translation of the Bible into the Gothic language. There, significantly, it is used to connote a sense of loving and fraternal care and concern for one's fellow man:

"broþralubon in izvis misso friaþvamildjai; sveriþai izvis misso faurarahnjandans . . . . "[7] Similarly, a loveless attitude is translated by the term "unmildjai" (Ulfilas, p. 209). The author of the Old Saxon Heliand also uses milte to convey the idea of a loving, caring attitude. There the dying Christ bids the apostle John to care for his mother:

> hiet that hie iru fulgengi uuell,
> minniodi sie sô mildo, sô man is muoder scal,
> idis unuusmana. (5617ff.)[8]

Because the word milte connotes a loving, caring attitude, it follows that the word is used as an attribute or epithet of God and also of a lord or ruler. This usage serves to underscore the concern which a lord displays for his people as well as his willingness to provide those entrusted to his care with whatever they require in order to exist and to prosper. We read in the "Wessobrunner Gebet", for example:

> Do dar niuuiht ni uuas enteo ni uuenteo,
> enti do uuas der eino almahtico cot,
> manno miltisto . . . . [9]

In reference to this passage Ehrismann states: "Gott war vor der Welt, also: er ist ewig; und er ist der eine und der allmächtige. Das sind drei Grundeigenschaften Gottes."[10] He further notes that "manno miltisto" is an epic formulation, the meaning of which corresponds to the religious concept of "Deus mitis, mitissimus".[11] But the manner in which the passage is formulated suggests that the author of the prayer considers milte, too, to be an attribute of God, who loving and propitiously provides for the well-being of mankind.

Further examples of this usage of milte can be found in the Heliand and in Otfrid's Evangelienbuch. The Gospel was to be written, so states the author of the Heliand, so that God might forever be praised,

huand hie habda starkan hugi,
mildean endi guodan, thie thes mêster uuas.
ædalordfrumo alomahtig. (Heliand, 29ff.)

Here, as in the "Wessobrunner Gebet", milte appears in conjunction with other divine attributes. In another passage, Christ's attitude towards the apostles whom He chooses to be His followers is described with the words "mildi uuas he im an is môde" (Heliand, 1259). Christ is, in other words, loving and gracious towards them. According to Otfrid, it was David's milte which entitled him to become King of the Jews: "Thaz lérta nan sin mílti, thaz er súlih uurti,/ thaz er uuard githíuto kúning thero líuto." (I. 3, 19f.)[12] These examples suggest that an attitude of love, care and concern is inherent in the nature of milte.

Related to this definition of milte is the use of the word to connote mercy. We see this meaning as early as the time of Ulfilas, who translates Philippians 2, 1 in the following manner: "Jabai hvo nu gaþrafsteino in Xristau, jabai hvo gaþlaihte friaþvos, jabai hvo gamainduþe ahmins, jabai hvo mildiþo jah gableiþeino." (Ulfilas, p. 181) The Old High German translation of Tatian uses milte exclusively in the sense of "mercy". The unmerciful servant is reprimanded by his master with the following words: "ni gilamf thir zi miltenne thines ebenscalkes, soso ih thir milti uuas?" (99,4)[13] In the Tatian translation, as in the Heliand, the beatitude of mercy is rendered with the word milte: "Salige sint thie thar sint miltherze, uuanta sie

folgent miltidun." (Tatian, 22, 12)[14]

Milte is frequently used in Old High German to describe the attitude of Christ when He takes pity on the unfortunate, heals the sick, and raises the dead to life. In such passages milte is best translated as "compassion", a meaning closely related to that of mercy. This meaning of the word is exemplified by Christ's response to the centurion of Capharnaum in Otfrid: "Gab er mo ántuurti mit mihileru mílti,/ mit uuórton uuolt er suázen thia geloúbe in imo buázen." (Otfrid, III. 2, 9f.) A similar usage of milte occurs in the Tatian translation when Christ, beholding the crowd, is moved to compassion for the people because of their bewilderment: "Gisehenti tho thie menigi miltita in . . . ." (Tatian 44, 1) Mercy and compassion are outgrowths of a loving, caring attitude; hence it is not surprising that milte should be used to refer to both phenomena.

A third meaning of the word milte is generosity or liberality, which, like mercy and compassion, is also rooted in the attitude of love, care and concern. This usage occurs in the Heliand, where Christ is described as "milderan medomgebon", i.e., a more generous lord than any who ever lived in this world (Heliand, 1200). Generosity is a desirable and even an essential trait of a king. We see this not only in religious but in secular literature as well. Beowulf is representative of numerous Anglo-Saxon writings which use milte in this context. The title hero, for example, is described with the words "sinces brytta", a giver of goods, and "gold-wine", a gold-distributing friend.[15] Both terms are used exclusively as epithets of

a king or prince. In other words, kingship is synonymous with generosity. That the two are inseparably related is also revealed at the end of the epic, when Beowulf is characterized in the following manner: "cwǣdon ƀæt hē wǣre wyruld-cyninga,/ manna mildust ond mon-ðwærust." (Beowulf, 3180f.)

On the basis of the examples cited above we see that milte, as it appears in early Germanic languages, is an aristocratic virtue with three basic connotations: loving care and concern for one's subjects or one's fellow man, mercy and compassion, and generosity. Milte continues to be used with these meanings in the language and literature of the early Middle High German period. But if we compare these usages of the word to usages found in the works of authors of the courtly period, we notice that the concept has undergone a process of development. The following quotation from Thomasin is an appropriate example:

> Diu milte ist eine tugente guot
> und hât ir wurze in rîchem muot.
> nu sage was milte müge sîn?
> si ist des rîchen muotes schîn.
> daz geben heizet milte niht,
> doch wizzet daz es geschiht
> von der milte, der gerne gît. (13951ff.)[16]

Prior to the courtly period we find no sign of reflection on the nature of milte. Its meaning and usage are largely taken for granted. In the quotation from Thomasin, on the other hand, we find a reflective attempt to define the essence of the virtue. We also learn that giving per se does not constitute milte but rather is one of its possible manifestations. We must ask ourselves what Thomasin means

by "des rîchen muotes schîn". He seems to imply that the attitude with which one bestows goods rather than the act of giving constitutes true milte, since "rîcher muot" designates the attitude which prompts one to be generous.

In Walther's poem "Rechte Milte"[17] we also encounter reflections on the nature of milte. Walther speaks of "der groze wille" inherent in this virtue, i.e., the attitude or desire which prompts one to be generous. "Witze" and "list" are also needed if one is to be considered a generous man. Like Thomasin, Walther seems to suggest that the mere act of giving cannot be identified with true liberality, which must instead be the result of careful deliberation.

That milte has undergone a process of development is also apparent in the "Spruchdichtung" of Reinmar von Zweter. Reinmar observes that êre has many companions; one of the most important - perhaps the single most important - is Milte. The significance of this virtue becomes apparent when we consider that Reinmar lists eleven companions of êre but chooses to elaborate only on Milte:

> Den rîchen guotes, armen an gemüete:
> des vert diu hôchgelobte süeze güete
> vil wîselôs mit ir gesinde . . . . (71, 7ff.)[18]

The formulation "armen an gemüete" also occurs in Thomasin. For both authors it refers to the opposite of "rîcher muot" and connotes a loveless, greedy attitude. This quotation stresses the incompatibility of honor and greed, the diametric opposite of milte. Only the generous man can be considered honorable, for milte and êre are inextricably related.

The relationship of milte and êre is also stressed in another "Spruch" by Reinmar, in which he focuses on the decline of goodness and virtue in his times:

> Wir haben nû êre dinge vil,
> diu wîlent laster hiezen, als ich iuch bescheiden wil:
> man heizet karkeit witze unt lobt den man, swie er
> gewinnet guot. (112, 1ff.)

It is characteristic of the evils of the age that honor is accorded the man who knows how to acquire possessions, whether he does so by legitimate or by ruthless and dishonest means. Milte, Reinmar observes, is now met with ridicule, whereas it was formerly rendered honor.

Bruder Wernher, who also writes during the period of courtly decline, expresses thoughts about milte similar to those of Reinmar. He laments having praised a prince who, he wrongly believed, would use his possessions to benefit the poor and needy members of society for the sake of his honor:

> und iemer wê, daz ich vür eteslîchen hân sô vil gesworn,
> an dem ich wânde, er wolde umb êre entlîhen
> sîn guot den kumberhaften . . . . (12, 9ff.)[19]

Like Reinmar, Wernher maintains that the man who lacks milte cannot be considered honorable.

The examples cited above indicate that the meaning of milte was substantially broadened and carefully elaborated during the courtly period. It is also noteworthy that prior to that time the relationship of milte and êre was never dealt with. A ruler, of course, won honor by being generous to his subjects, but no detailed treatment of the interrelationship between honor and liberality exists prior to the courtly period.

It will be the purpose of this dissertation to analyze the broad spectrum of meaning with which milte is used by individual authors of the courtly period and to consider the significant role which milte plays in their conception of courtly society. The relationship between milte and êre will also be dealt with at length. Because milte plays a role in so many works of courtly literature, it would be impossible to deal with its occurrence in every major work of the period. Thus we will consider its meaning and function in the most important and most representative works of the various literary genres. But the process by which milte acquires a broad and sophisticated meaning and becomes a significant concept in courtly thought can best be understood if we trace its development from the period immediately preceding the courtly era. The following chapter will therefore concern itself with the meaning and role of milte in precourtly and early courtly literature.

CHAPTER II

MILTE IN PRECOURTLY AND EARLY COURTLY LITERATURE

In the preceding chapter we noted that the word milte occurred in early Germanic languages and literatures as an aristocratic virtue with three basic connotations: an attitude of love and concern for one's subjects or one's fellow man, mercy or compassion, and generosity. We also noted that prior to the courtly period there was little, if any reflection on the meaning and nature of milte: whenever the word was used, its meaning was largely taken for granted. Nevertheless, the concept of milte does play a role, and at times a very important role, in precourtly and early courtly literature.

Turning to the literature of that era, we must ask ourselves, first of all, whether the three early meanings of the word milte persisted or whether they underwent any significant change and development. We must also consider how important a role milte played in the literature of that era. Even the absence of milte from a given work of literature reveals something about the nature and role of the concept. Therefore, we must attempt to account for its absence when it is totally lacking or when it plays a very insignificant role in a particular work. Because the antithesis of milte, the vice of greed, is frequently a theme in the literature of the period under consideration, we must also take into account the role which it plays. We can best come to terms with these problems by examining the meaning, role and significance of milte in several of the more important precourtly

and early courtly epics, since it is in the epics that we most frequently encounter the concept.

A. The Precourtly Epic

1. The Alexanderlied. It is noteworthy that the concept of milte is almost entirely absent from the earliest extant version of the Alexanderlied, (V) (Vorau-Steiermark), which was written in approximately 1150 by Pfaffe Lamprecht. In his discussion of (V), Kurt Ruh notes that Lamprecht, like his predecessor, Alberich von Besinzo, follows the Greek source of the Alexander novel, in which the protagonist is portrayed as an exemplary individual: "Vorbildlich als Held und Eroberer, kühn und listenreich, vorbildlich als Mann von Erziehung und Bildung (63-220), aber auch vorbildlich in seinen Herrschertugenden."[1] It is true that the author stresses a number of Alexander's exemplary characteristics: He is "creftic"[2] and "gewaltic" (52), and he possesses "list" and "kundecheit" (54) to a higher degree than any other king who has ever lived. As a "frumer kunic" (68) he ranks second only to Salomon - second because he is a heathen. It is also true that Alexander receives an outstanding education. He learns not only the ways of war and self-defense but also a number of more refined skills and arts such as reading, writing, astronomy, science and even justice ("daz er von deme unrehti beschiede daz rehte", 218). Upon completion of his education at the age of twelve, he is characterized in an entirely positive manner:

Alsô stâtich was ime ein mût,
umbe al wertlîch gût
sô wolter ni nieht geliegen
noch sich fone cheiner wârheit gezien. (225ff.)

Because of his exemplary character as a youth and because of his outstanding education, in part under the direction of the wise Aristotle, we expect to read of Alexander's exemplary and virtuous conduct when he becomes king. However, we find no evidence that he continues to be virtuous as an adult, nor that he puts into practice the principles which he had learned in his youth.

The change in Alexander's character becomes clear when we examine the two passages in the work in which milte seems to be implicit. The young Alexander is described in the following way:

Nû vernemt, wie sich Alexander vur nam:
swâ sô ein frumich rîter zû zim chom,
dem bôt er lîp unt gût. (155ff.)

As a youth, Alexander is evidentally milte: He is favorably disposed toward worthy knights with whom he comes in contact, and he is also generous to them without expecting anything in return. He is content to reward excellence. When he becomes king, he also promises to share "lîp unte gût" (585) with his men, but he does so entirely within the context of "Dienst-Lohn". He promises to reward them if they will serve him. His generosity is a means to an end: With it he wins their unswerving loyalty:

si sprâchen alle mit ainer zungen:
'got behûte uns disen chunich jungen,
daz er mit genâden vil lange mûze leben
in sînem rîche.
sô wê dem, der ime geswîche.' (589ff.)

As a king, Alexander never receives the epithet milte, which is traditionally one of the most important characteristics of a ruler. He is not generous to his men in the sense of giving them even more than what he owes them. Nor is he milte in the sense of being merciful. When he seemingly displays mercy towards the messengers of Darius, deciding to spare them rather than to have them executed, he is motivated by his need of their services rather than by genuine compassion (see 1070ff.). They will serve his purposes by returning to Darius with his reply to the latter's message.

From the very beginning of his active career, Alexander is motivated not by love and concern for his subjects but by a desire to conquer the entire world. To prove himself worthy of the name of king, which is accorded him even before the death of his father, he invades and conquers, without provocation, the kingdom of Nicolaus of Cesarea (373ff.). Upon assuming the throne, he undertakes a campaign of conquest that extends from Italy and Africa to the very realm of his powerful opponent Darius, who until then had been master of the world. Alexander's conduct in Sicily is characteristic of his behavior in every other land in which he meets with resistance:

> Er fûr dannen in Sicilienlant
> unde ferweltigôt alle die er dâ vant
> unde tete sie swergen herrevart,
> daz sîn vater nie erwarph. (617ff.)

His opponents are faced with two choices: Either they pay him tribute and are spared, as in the case of the Romans, or they subject themselves to attack and subsequent defeat. Alexander is clearly guilty of "uber-

mutecheit" (723; 827). It is obvious that milte is incompatible with such an attitude.

From the discrepancy between Alexander's portrayal as an admirable youth and his later less than admirable conduct, we can deduce that the author's purpose is not, as Ruh contends[3], to portray an exemplary individual. Instead, it is his primary intention to write world history. Alexander is an important figure because he brings about the dissolution of the Persian World Empire and replaces it with his own Macedonian World Empire. His is the last great world kingdom before that of imperial Rome. Alexander lives, as DeBoor notes, "als heidnischer Herrscher vor Christi Heilstat"[4], and it is precisely his place in history which makes him a worthy literary subject.

In addition to writing world history, Lamprecht also intends to emphasize the "vanitas" motif which he introduces at the beginning of the work. Werner Schröder argues convincingly that (V) was not completed but broken off before the author could carry out that intention.[5] Schröder disputes the contention of Maurer and Schwietering that the confrontation between Alexander and Darius constitutes the climax of the epic.[6] If that were the case, more than nine brief lines would be dedicated to Alexander's victory over his adversary. Schröder agrees with DeBoor, who also stresses the central importance of the "vanitas" motif:

> Wer sein Gedicht so nachdrücklich mit dem
> Vanitas-Gedanken begann, sah nicht nur den
> Aufstieg des Mazedoniers; er hatte den
> Blick schon auf die Vanitas-Lehre des
> Paradiessteines und das Ende Alexanders
> gerichtet.[7]

Alexander's desire to conquer the entire world is symptomatic of greed,

which is the very antithesis of milte. To show the utter folly and futility of such an undertaking is surely the intention of the author. Hence it is not surprising to find so little mention of milte in (V).

The portrayal of Alexander in the Strassburg (S)[8] continuation of the Alexanderlied, which was written approximately ten years after (V), is to a certain extent similar to his portrayal in (V). In (S) as in (V), Alexander sets out on a campaign of world conquest, subduing every land which resists him. Furthermore, in both versions of the text Alexander at times shows no mercy toward his opponents. As revenge for the death of three of his princes at the hands of the people of Tyre, he has 3000 of the city's richest citizens blinded and hanged (V, 996ff.; S, 1385ff.). The fact that he rejoices over his victory in Tyre prompts the author to make the following significant comment:

> des siges, des er dâr nam,
> wêre er ein wol bedâht man,
> er ne wurdis niemer frô . . . . (1394ff.)

Neither in (S) nor in (V) does Alexander begin his career as "ein wol bedâht man"; he never stops to reflect upon his actions or to moderate his anger but instead pursues his goal of conquest in an almost instinctive and often ruthless manner. It is only after numerous conquests, when the messengers of Darius plead with him to spare their lives, that he finally allays his wrath and pauses to ponder the situation for the first time: "Alexander bedâhte sih,/ den boten wart er gnêdich." (1510f.; V, 1091f.)

In addition to portraying Alexander as a world conqueror who occasionally uses ruthless means to attain his goals, (S) fully develops

the "vanitas" motif which was touched upon but not carried out in (V). Despite having become master of the world and despite receiving not only tribute but also praise and admiration from the countless kings whom he has subdued, Alexander is dissatisfied: "des ne dûhte ime allis niht genûc" (6613). Prompted by "hôhmut" (6614) and "giricheit" (6683), he sets out on a campaign to Paradise, where he demands tribute from the angels. This enterprise is described by the author as "ein michil tumpheit" (6669), but the folly of the undertaking does not become apparent to Alexander until a wise Jew interprets the meaning of the stone which had been given to Alexander at the Gates of Paradise:

> ouch sît ir algemeine
> gemanet mit dem steine,
> daz ir ûh nihtis ne verhebet
> al di wîle di ir lebet.
> bewaret ûh von der giricheit,
> wande sî machet manige herzeleit.
> wande swer sô giric wille wesen,
> wî mach der imer genesen? (7159ff.)

The stone serves as a warning against precisely the two vices which had motivated him to undertake the Journey to Paradise: superbia and greed. The end of his life is as significant as his Journey to Paradise, because he heeds the warning, overcomes his vices and becomes a truly exemplary king (7257ff.). (S) accomplished the same purpose which (V) had meant to achieve: to use the life of Alexander as a warning against specific vices as well as to depict the folly of Alexander's undertaking of world conquest.

Despite the similarities between (V) and (S), however, there are also a number of pronounced differences in the two versions. Rhyme and meter are improved in (S), for example, and greater emphasis is placed on

the adventurous aspects of tha work.[9] But more important, Alexander's character is also modified. Although the Alexander of the later version is at times unduly harsh in dealing with his adversaries, he is also capable of displaying generosity and even magnanimity towards those whom he has vanquished. In (V) we encounter only two oblique references to Alexander's generosity; in (S), however, the hero is explicitly characterized as milte. At one point he and his men come upon a fortress in which they find prisoners whom Darius has maimed and blinded. When Alexander witnesses their misery, he is moved to compassion and generosity towards them:

> Alexander der gûte
> dô er ir nôt an gesach,
> harte irbarmete ime daz.
> er lîz si alle ledic wesen
> unde hîz in kuninclîchen geben
> golt unde silber.
> der tugint was er milder
> unde gebôt, daz ir iegelîch
> sîn eigen wider zû sih
> nême und vorder mère
> lebete mit êren. (3575ff.)

"Der wunderlîche Alexander" of (V) - "wunderlich" in the sense of proud and arrogant - has become "Alexander der Gute" in (S).[10]

Alexander is equally magnanimous in dealing with the vanquished Darius and his subjects. When Darius is mortally wounded by assassins, Alexander mourns his death, arranges for a rich and splendid funeral, and even acts as pallbearer (3872ff.). He proclaims "fride unde gnade" (3892) throughout his opponent's realm, entrusts the care of the land to its own noblemen, "und liez wîb unde man/ ir iegelîch sîn reht hân" (3896f.). That peace and reconciliation rather than revenge are uppermost

in his mind is further evidenced by his marriage to Roxann, the daughter of Darius.

Clearly, then a new and milder dimension has been added to Alexander's character in (S), a dimension which was almost totally lacking in (V). We can account for this and for the other differences between the two versions by recalling that (S) was written approximately ten years later than (V); it was undoubtedly meant for an audience whose taste was becoming increasingly more refined and courtly. Alexander's ability to display milte and erbärmde, two important courtly virtues, transforms him from a mere barbarian conqueror to a figure of somewhat courtly dimensions.

The word milte is used to describe not only Alexander but other rulers as well. It occurs either as an attribute of a ruler or as a descriptive term for his conduct; in both instances it denotes generosity. To encourage his soldiers to fight bravely and steadfastly, the Indian leader Porus, Alexander's enemy, bestows goods upon them:

> der tûrlîche wîgant
> under sîn here er dô spranc
> und manete si vaste zô der nôt.
> mildiclîche er in bôt
> phellil unde sîde,
> golt unde gesmide. (4520ff.)

Darius, too, has the reputation of being generous:

> 'man saget, Daris edele kuninc,
> du sîs gwaldich unde frumich
> und stolz dînes gemûtis
> und milde dines gûtis.' (3048ff.)

This reputation is readily acknowledged by Alexander as he speaks to the dying Darius:

'. . . du wârig biderbe unde gût
und hetes manlichen mût.
du wêre vil milde,
gevôge zo dînem schilde . . . .' (3802ff.)

Milte occurs here as part of a "Fürstenspiegel"; it is one of a number of attributes such as "wârhaft", "êrhaft", "wol geborn" and "rîche" (3806ff.) which are generally characteristic of an exemplary lord. The attribute milte is also given to Candacis, the queen who befriends Alexander (6308). In the last two instances, however, the word seems to be used primarily as filler; the author needs a word which rhymes with "schilde", and "milde" serves that purpose.

In summary, the concept of milte occurs implicitly in (V) and explicitly in (S) as generosity, but it is defined primarily in pre-courtly terms: Milte implies the giving of goods within the framework of "Dienst-Lohn", as we saw from Alexander's offer of "lîp unt gût" to his men in exchange for their services in (V) and from Porus's gift of money and goods to his army as an incentive to fight in (S). The concept does not yet mean giving without the hope of receiving something in return, except in rare instances, such as Alexander's generosity to the victims of Darius. His treatment of these unfortunate people is also indicative of compassion. Milte as compassion is also implicit in Alexander's beneficent attitude toward the defeated Darius and his subjects. Greed, the antithesis of milte, is viewed as a particularly negative vice which must be overcome if the individual is to live in harmony with himself, his fellow man, and God.

When the concept of milte occurs in the Alexanderlied, its meaning is taken for granted and receives no elaboration. Occasionally it is

even used as filler. Although milte is not of central importance in either version of the work, its appearance, particularly in (S), is significant, because it heralds the advent of an era in which courtly concepts begin to play an ever-increasing role. In a later chapter we will deal with the concept of milte in the Alexanderlied of Rudolf von Ems. There it will become apparent that the meaning of the concept has undergone a profound transformation and deepening.

2. The Rolandslied of Pfaffe Konrad. Although the concept of milte occurs in Konrad's Rolandslied, which was written in approximately 1170, it is absent from those passages in which we most logically expect to find it. We noted above that the exemplary medieval lord is characteristically generous to his followers, yet in the Rolandslied we find few passages in which Karl, Roland or the other outstanding Christian leaders either promise to reward their men or actually display generosity towards them. Maurer makes the following accurate observation about the absence of milte in the lord-vassal relationship in the epic: "Zwar fehlt in den zahlreichen Reden der Führer die milte gegenüber den Gefolgsmännern: der jenseitige Lohn allein steht in Aussicht."[11]

From the very beginning of the work it is apparent that the followers of Karl are motivated exclusively by the desire for martyrdom and eternal salvation. It is said of Karl's twelve most loyal servants:

> Sine gerten nihtis mêre,
> wan durch got irsterbin,
> daz himelrîche mit der martire erwerben. (80ff.)

Earthly reward is unimportant to the twelve because it contributes

nothing to the attainment of their spiritual goals. Consequently, in soliciting their services for the fight against the heathens, Karl does not promise them material blessings but instead assures them of divine reward:

> "Swer durch got arbeitet,
> sîn lôn wirt ime gereitet,
> dâ der keiser allir himele
> vorderet hinwidere,
> daz er iu virlihen hât,
> frôlichen ir vor im stât.
> Swer durch got irstirbit,
> ich sage iu waz er dâ mit erwirbit:
> eine kuincliche chrône
> in der marterêre chôre. . . ." (95ff.)

Their desire for martyrdom rather than for material reward is stressed repeatedly throughout the work. When, for example, Karl departs from Spain, leaving behind Roland and the other eleven, the author reaffirms their lack of interest in earthly gain:

> Fursten die dâ bestunden,
> di mit Rôlante hûten,
> ouch ne gerten si nehainer gewinne,
> ni wan die wâren gotes minne. (3255ff.)

Similarly, after the destruction of Machmet's temple, Roland forbids his men to take booty, not only because it is "unraine" (4202) since it comes from a heathen house of worship, but also because the men's attention should be directed primarily to God and to their holy mission. The men immediately see the wisdom of Roland's command and respond to it by treading the heathen treasure into the ground and praising the Lord (4167ff.). Of all the Christian leaders, only Roland promises his men material reward, but he does so on only one occasion.

The word milte is used to denote generosity only three times in the epic. In the first instance, as Horst Richter notes, "der als höfischer Ritter und miles saecularis gezeichnete Genelon empfiehlt die Erziehung seines Sohnes zu solcher milte"[12]:

> "Heizet in hêrlichen lebe:
> er mach wole mildeclichen gebe,
> habe willich sîne man." (1698ff.)

The second instance reveals that milte is important to the pagan nobility as well, a fact which is evidenced by Marsilie's directives to Paligan, to whom he entrusts the welfare of his kingdom as he lays dying:

> "Bestaetige wîslîche,
> dizze chunincrîche
> gezimt grôzer êre.
> Nu gib iz selbe ainem herren,
> der disem rîche gezem,
> der milticlichen gebe
> unt nicht in spar von den êren." (7415ff.)

In the third instance, the heathen Markgraf Targis is able to retain a body of "goltwin" (men who serve a lord for the sake of gold) because of his generosity: "vil willic wâren si im,/ want er milticlichen gab . . . ." (4676f.)

We noted above that in both versions of the Alexanderlied generosity was used as a means of ensuring the willing service of one's vassals. Milte has the same function in the Rolandslied and in most of the other precourtly and early courtly epics. It strengthens the bond of loyalty between lord and follower, as in the case of Targis. Marsilie and his men also use their wealth to ensure Genelun's continued loyalty to them. When it becomes apparent that Genelun is fully committed to betraying Karl, the heathens lavishly bestow gifts upon him (2940ff.).

Their perverse generosity brings about the desired result, as we see from Genelun's pledge to Marsilie after receiving the priceless gifts: "Ich scol dir iemer ungeswichin sîn" (2568).

Milte as generosity is more than a means of strengthening the bond between lord and vassal, however. It is also an expression of friendship and love. The formulation "ze minnen geben" occurs several times in the Rolandslied. The golden chain which Genelun wears, for example, was a gift: "Den sante ime ze minnen/ der kunc von den Britten" (1581f.). His horse was originally a gift to Karl from the Roman Mantel: "der gabiz dem kaisere ze minnen" (1628). Similarly, the sword which he receives from the heathen Valdebrun had been a gift to the latter from a king: "Daz gab er mir ze minnen,/ nu fûre duz samt dir hinnen" (2527f.). In each instance the gift implicitly betokens friendship, love or good will on the part of the giver. It will be shown later how this aspect of generosity, which occurs in capsule form in precourtly and early courtly literature, is fully developed during the courtly period.

In addition to denoting generosity in the Rolandslied, milte also has the connotations of "'gnädig', 'barmherzig' oder allgemein humanus"[13]. It is used in this sense in reference to Karl: "Aller tugende was er ûzerchorn./ Milter herre enwart in die werlt nie geborn." (707f.) Richter notes that milte occurs with these connotations both in Early Middle High German literature and in the Vulgate as an attribute of God[14], a fact which leads him to conclude: "Auch in dieser Eigenschaft bildet Kaiser Karl also Gott ab, und entsprechend

nennt auch sein Offizium diese Eigenschaft vom heiligen Karl . . . ."[15] The Regali natus Deuxième nocturne describes Karl as "imperator mitissimus et fidei propugnatur sanctissimus", and the Vita Karoli says of him "populo tamen suo mitissimus apparuit"[16]. Milte is thus one of many virtues which makes Karl a figure of divine stature. Roland, too, is described as "der milte" (3985). Although Richter asserts that the word has the same meaning here as it does when used in reference to Karl[17], the context suggests that milte merely serves as filler (milte/schilte). The same appears to be true when the Swabians are described as "die milten" (7855); "milten" provides a convenient rhyme word for "schilte" in the following line.

The antithesis of milte is embodied in the person of Genelun. An in-depth analysis of his character will not be made, since such an analysis does not fall within the scope of this study. It must be noted, however, that although Genelun is not portrayed as a totally evil man[18], his lack of milte contributes substantially to making him a negative figure. In the first place, Genelun is motivated to betray Karl in part by greed. The author explicitly compares him to Judas who betrayed Christ "umbe drîzzic phennige" (1931). He further states that it is "durch nît unde durch gebe" (1980) - because of envy and hatred of Roland as well as for the sake of material gain - that Genelun becomes a traitor.[19] In the second place, Genelun is so devoid of compassion that he urges Marsilie to show the twelve no mercy; if they are slain, he says, Karl will inevitably die of sorrow (2470ff.). His lack of compassion is particularly maleficent not only because

Karl is his kinsman but also because Karl trusts him totally and bears him great affection, which is evident on numerous occasions[20].

In summary, it is evident that milte does not play a major role in the Rolandslied, primarily because eternal salvation takes precedence over material gain in the minds of the Christians. When the word milte does occur, however, it signifies either generosity or mercy and compassion. Generosity serves either to strengthen the ties between lord and vassal or to express friendship, love and good will. Mercy and compassion, in turn, lend divine proportions to the individual, as in the case of Karl, whereas greed and lack of compassion constitute two of the most negative aspects of an individual's character. As in the Alexanderlied, the concept of milte is not elaborated but simply taken for granted. In some instances the word is even used as filler. Nevertheless, its presence in the work is indicative of the approach of the courtly era.

B. The Early Courtly Epic: The Eneide of Heinrich von Veldeke

The appearance of the Eneide of Heinrich von Veldeke, who was recognized without reservation as the "Begründer des neuen höfischen Romans" in Germany by the generation which followed him[21], marks the advent of the courtly period. As Ehrismann notes, "Die neue, feinere Auffassung vom höfischen Leben, die angemessenere sprachliche Darstellung und die kunstmäßigere Metrik hat erst Heinrich v. Veldeke, nach französischem Vorbilde, eröffnet."[22] Gabriele Schieb, too, calls

attention to the significant place which Veldeke occupies in the history of medieval German literature:

> Heinrich von Veldeke steht mit seinem 'Eneasroman' an der Schwelle der deutschen höfischen Klassik um 1200. Er selbst hat diese Schwelle noch nicht überschritten, hat aber den großen Deutschen nach ihm den Schritt über sie vorbereitet und erleichtert. Das haben sie ihm dankbar anerkannt.[23]

The Eneide had already been four-fifths completed by 1174, and it was finished before 1190 in Thüringen.[24] Veldeke's source was the Anglo-Norman novel Roman d' Eneas. Schieb notes that Vergil's Aeneid was merely the "Stoffgrundlage" for the Anglo-Norman work, "die zu einer neuen Dichtung mit eigener Sinngebung verarbeitet ist"[25]. She further observes:

> Vergils nationalrömische Leitidee wiederzubeleben, konnte nicht im Sinne des mittelalterlichen Dichters liegen. Er hatte eigene, zeitgemäße Anliegen, er gewinnt dem Stoff zeitgemäße "Wahrheiten" ab. Der antike Stoff ist nur Mittel zum Zweck, der Selbstauslegung des neuen höfisch-ritterlichen Menschen . . . .[26]

Although Veldeke makes significant departures from his source[27], he, like his Anglo-Norman predecessor, has in mind the "Selbstauslegung des neuen höfischen Menschen" of which Schieb speaks. Because Veldeke is an early courtly writer to whom "das Höfische" is of central importance, and also because we witness in his work a finer conception of courtliness than in the literary works of the preceding generation, we expect to find that milte plays a significant role in the Eneide.

As in the earlier works with which we dealt, milte occurs in Veldeke's epic[28] as an attribute of a lord. Eneas is characterized as

"milde" three times; in each instance, however, the word seems to be used as filler. It supplies a convenient rhyme for "schilde" twice (145; 8097) and for "ge vilde" once (3586). Avencius, the son of Hercules, is also described as "milde" (5056), as are the noblemen Turnus and Pallas (7539). In these instances, too, "milde" merely provides a rhyme for "schilde".

The word milte assumes greater significance when it is included among the many virtues of an outstanding nobleman as part of a "Fürstenspiegel". When, for example, Eneas mourns the slain Pallas, he mentions milte as one of the young hero's numerous exemplary characteristics:

> Was ich in kurzcen stunden
> Tugende an dir han funden,
> Manheyt unde synne,
> Treuwe unde mynne,
> Kunheyt und mannis rat
> Und willic herze zu der tat,
> Gute liste und groze krafft.
> Du were stete und ernsthafft,
> milde und rein mute.
> Du hete sitte und gute
> Und aller tugende genuc . . . . (8055ff.)

We encounter a similar description of the slain Turnus in which milte also appears as one of many outstanding virtues which he possessed (12610ff.). Since the context provides no clue about the meaning of the word, it is impossible to determine its exact connotation; it could mean "generous", as it frequently does when used as part of a "Fürstenspiegel", and it could also connote mercy, compassion, and the quality of being "humanus", as it did in reference to Karl in the Rolandslied.

There are, however, two instances in which milte is used attributively with a clear connotation. When Veldeke describes his patroness, the countess von Kleve, as

> Die milde und die gute,
> Und die mit vreiem mute
> Wol groz zimt geben . . . . (13448ff.),

it is evident that the word means generosity. It has a very different connotation when used in reference to Dido as she rides out with Eneas, determined to win his love: "Ir herze daz was milde/ Von dez heren minne" (1796f.). In this case "milde" is very close in meaning to its New High German equivalent and might best be translated as "mellow" or "mild".

In addition to occurring explicitly as an attribute with varying meanings, milte also occurs implicitly in the giving of gifts as a token of friendship, love and good will. When Eneas arrives in Tyre, he bestows rich gifts upon Dido (755ff.). He does so not only to express his gratitude for the hospitality which she has promised to extend to him, but also to indicate that he comes in peace and friendship. Similarly, upon his arrival in Italy, Eneas sends gifts to King Latin. The formulation "ze minnen geben" which was used in the Rolandslied in conjunction with the giving of gifts occurs here as well: "Her sante ime zu minnen/ Sine gabe harte schone" (3860f.). The gifts are a gesture of Eneas' good will towards his new host. After his first meeting with Lavinia, his bride, Eneas expresses the love and happiness which he feels by giving exquisite jewelry to Lavinia's attendants "zu gabe und zu mynne" (12998). His generosity

on this occasion is more than a courteous gesture; it is a natural expression of joy, which by its very nature demands to be shared. It must also be noted, however, that Eneas' action is motivated in part by his desire for honor. The author clearly states: "Das gut gab her umbe ere" (13006). This is the first time in our examination of precourtly and early courtly literature that we encounter explicit mention of the relationship between milte and êre. This relationship, which is taken for granted here, is fully elaborated in the literature of the later courtly period.

That milte is the fruit of love and joy is revealed even more clearly at an earlier juncture in the epic. After a long and arduous struggle, Eneas finally defeats Turnus; having done so, he reminds Latin of the latter's pledge to give Lavinia to him in marriage, a pledge which Latin willingly reaffirms. At this point the author tells us:

> Des tages hete der Troyan
> Synes willen vil getan,
> Des liez wol schinen
> den vremden und den synen.
> Alle die iz geruchten,
> Die syne gnade suchten,
> Arm und riche,
> Die gewerte her mildicliche.
> Her gab mit williger hant
> Beide ross und gewant,
> Schaz und waphen. (12689ff.)

The line "Des liez wol schinen" is particularly significant. It is not enough that Eneas himself has enjoyed the good fortune of accomplishing his goals; he must share it with those around him. The gods have been generous to him, and he, in turn, is generous to others:

'Die gote habn wol an mir getan,
Ich wil mildiclichen gebn,
Ich truw diz gut nicht verlebn.' (12702ff.)

A significant feature of Eneas' generosity is that it is bestowed willingly, as the above line "Her gab mit williger hant" indicates. His willingness to give is also stressed in a later passage, where we are told:

. . . her kunde wol gebn
Und hete ouch das grose gut,
Dar zu willigen mut. (13178ff.)

Willingness to give is mentioned in both instances as a characteristic feature of milte, although this theme is not elaborated. It is left to authors of the later courtly period to develop it at length. It will be shown later that giving reluctantly does not constitute true milte and that the attitude with which one gives is even more important than the gift itself for the generation which follows Veldeke.

In Veldeke's epic, as in all courtly epics, milte plays an integral part in courtly festivities. The "hochzît" shows the courtly world in its perfect and ideal state. The finest clothing is worn, the most sumptuous food and drink are served, and all the courtly arts and refinements are made manifest. The whole of society puts forth its best behavior; if courtly virtue were lacking - and milte is one of the most important courtly virtues - the celebration would be less than perfect. Furthermore, the "hochzît" traditionally occurs at a time of peace and harmony; it celebrates such joyous occasions as the "Schwertleite" of a knight, the arrival of a visiting dignitary or the marriage of nobility. Milte is perhaps the most fitting expression of the joy

of the court. Thus, at the "Schwertleite" of Pallas, his father displays generosity towards the guests:

> Do der werlt also vil
> Mit groszer vrode und spil
> Zu des koninges hofe quam,
> Do tet her alse ime wol zam.
> Her gab mit volliger hant
> Schaz, rosz unde gewant,
> Evander der reyche. (6281ff.)

The appropriateness of his gesture is stressed by the author; it is fitting that the king display generosity because by so doing he not only assures that the joy of the occasion is complete - his guests would be less than happy if their minds were burdened by worries about poverty - but also provides for the welfare of his subjects and of those who wish him well.

Milte is also very much evident at the wedding celebration of Eneas and Lavinia. Of the 88 lines dedicated exclusively to the description of the celebration, almost two-thirds deal with the generosity which is displayed there. Eneas, who has been crowned king, is the first to give gifts, which the author deems fitting and appropriate:

> Der gabe her selber began,
> Wan her was aller herst,
> Do von hub hersz aller erst,
> So wol kuninge gezam. (13168ff.)

There could be no better way for him to begin his reign than by providing for the needs of his people. The result of his generosity is that the recipients as well as their children become rich to the end of their days (13172ff.). After Eneas has displayed generosity, regretting that there are not more people who desire his gifts (13203ff.), the other noblemen present also begin to do so. In this instance milte

means giving without limits: "Die gaben groszliche,/ Die weninc achten den schaden" (13214f.). In the precourtly and early courtly period, moderation is not yet an essential feature of milte; to give to the point of impoverishing oneself is a virtue, not a vice. The result of such munificent giving is the honor which it brings to those who display it. The nobility gives ". . . durch ires selbes ere/ Und durch den kuninc . . . ." (13210f.). Their unbounded generosity to the "Spielleute", for example, increases their fame; full of joy and gratitude, the performers depart to sing the praises of their benefactors (13195ff.). Veldeke states that only one other celebration was of the same magnitude as that of Eneas' wedding: the "Schwertleite" of Kaiser Friedrich's two sons at Mainz in 1184. There, too, milte played a major role in making the festival as elaborate and memorable as it was (13221ff.).

Although milte does not occur explicitly in the Eneide as mercy or compassion, it is clearly implicit in Eneas' treatment of his defeated adversary Turnus. Because their confrontation is a life and death struggle, Eneas has the right to kill Turnus upon defeating him; instead, he recognizes the nobility and merit of his opponent and is moved to the utmost compassion for him. The fact that Eneas recognizes the dignity and worth of Turnus and decides not only to spare his life but also to share his wealth and possessions with him indicates that Eneas is a figure of humane and courtly dimensions:

> Do erbarmetez den Troyan
> Daz Turnus der edel man
> So genendicliche her do sprach.
> Irbarmecliche her in an sach,

Der herzoge Eneas,
Wan Turnus ouch was
Ein edel vurste wol geborn,
Zu allen tugenden uz irkorn.
Durch das wold her in lasen leben
Und wolde ime geben
Vride und syne holde
Und gutes was hers wolde,
Beide burge und lant,
Schatz und rich gewant. (12559ff.)

Significantly, however, it is Turnus' greed which brings about his demise. Turnus wears a ring which he had taken from Pallas after having slain him; it is the same ring which Eneas had given Pallas as a token of friendship. When Eneas recognizes the ring, all compassion is put aside. Turnus, who in all other respects is an admirable and noble figure, has committed the sin of greed, and he must pay for this tragic flaw with his life:

'Das was dir nichein not
Das du das vingerlin truges,
Wan du in myner helffe sluges.
Es was ein ubel girheit,
Des sage ich dir die warheit,
Nu mustu des engelden.' (12596ff.)

The severity of the penalty is commensurate with the severity of the offense. Just as milte is one of the most important courtly virtues, so greed, its antithesis, is one of the most deplorable vices.

It was stated above that because Veldeke writes at the beginning of the courtly period and because he gives importance to the ideal of courtliness, milte should presumably play a significant role in his epic. To a degree, the evidence confirms that supposition. It is, of course, true that the word milte is occasionally used as filler, as it was in the precourtly works which we discussed. It is also true that the meaning of the word is nowhere elaborated but merely taken for

granted. Nevertheless, the concept of milte as generosity and compassion is an essential characteristic of Eneas, and it contributes in large measure to making him a figure of admirable and courtly dimensions. Throughout the work we find references to his generosity. He is a willing giver whose milte not only assures the survival and well-being of his people to the second generation but also enhances their existence by rendering their lives more joyful. Milte is an important characteristic of other heroes as well, as is evidenced by its inclusion in the "Fürstenspiegel" which we encounter in the work. Milte is, in fact, so important a characteristic of a lord that greed, its antithesis, is alone sufficient grounds for the slaying of an otherwise virtuous and exemplary individual.

We have also seen that milte plays an integral role in the "hochzît" in Veldeke's epic. In the precourtly epic this is not necessarily the case. The Strassburger Alexander, for example, includes a brief description of the hero's wedding celebration, but milte is not mentioned (see S, 4107ff.). Because the "hochzît" shows the courtly world in its ideal state, it is appropriate that all the courtly virtues be displayed, including milte. Moreover, milte is the most fitting and natural means of sharing the joy which is felt on festive occasions. The role which it plays in the festivities of the Eneide foreshadows the ever-increasing role which it will play in the "hochzîten" in later courtly literature.

C. Spielmannsepik

There are several reasons why the "Spielmannsepen" should be included in a discussion of the concept of milte in precourtly and early courtly literature. The definition of the term anticipates two of those reasons:

> Unter der Bezeichnung "Spielmannsepik" faßt man heute im allgemeinen eine Gruppe von fünf erzählenden Versgedichten in mittelhochdeutscher Sprache zusammen, deren Originalfassungen sicher oder vermutlich in die zweite Hälfte des 12. Jhs gehören und die weder zur Heldensage noch zur geistlichen oder höfischen Epik gerechnet werden können, obwohl sie stofflich und thematisch mannigfach damit verknüpft sind.[29]

First, although the dates of the original versions of these works as well as their chronology are uncertain[30], it is assumed that they were written in the second half of the twelfth century. Thus, they fall within the period under discussion in this chapter. Furthermore, even though the dating is uncertain and several of the works might have been written in the early thirteenth century, the language of the works as well as the verse have a distinctly "altertümliches Gepräge"[31] in comparison to the precourtly and early courtly literature which originates at approximately the same time:

> Grammatische Formen, formelhafte Wendungen, Ausdrucksweisen gehören weitgehend der ersten Jahrhunderthälfte an. Auch die Verskunst steht auf altertümlicher Stufe. Die Verse sind infolge der freien Senkungsfüllungen recht verschieden lang, ihr Rhythmus ist ungleichmäßig. Man hat sie mit Recht "kunstlos" genannt. Sie sind zu Reimpaaren gebunden, aber die Reime sind sehr häufig Assonanzen.[32]

Second, the works are in many ways related in subject matter and theme to the heroic and courtly epics which we will discuss in the following chapters. The concept of milte is defined in some respects quite differently in the "Spielmannsepen" than it is in the heroic and courtly epics of the later generations. Third, milte plays a role in all but one of the five works, and in two of them it plays a major role. The works are Orendel, Salman und Morolf, Herzog Ernst, St. Oswald and König Rother[33]. Because the chronology is totally uncertain, we will deal with the works in the order of least to most importance in regard to the concept of milte.

1. Orendel. It is significant that the concept of milte plays no role whatsoever in the epic Orendel. Although the word itself occurs twice in the work, it is used as part of a formula in both instances; the formula, in turn, seems to be employed solely for the sake of rhyme:

> "Der mir durch des heilgen grabes milt
> lihe sîn ros und sînen schilt --
> nit mêr dan drî kêre,
> so engert ich sin nit mêre . . . . "[34]

The same formula is repeated several lines later.[35] The concept of milte occurs neither implicitly nor explicitly anywhere else in the work. Its absence can be explained by analyzing the three themes with which the work deals as well as the depiction of the protagonist.

The first theme which the epic introduces is Orendel's desire for a bride. In contrast to the heroes of König Rother and St. Oswald, Orendel does not seek a wife because he needs an heir for the realm. As the youngest of three sons, he will not inherit his father's kingdom. At this important juncture, the text shows "eine bemerkenswerte Unklar-

heit"[36]. Orendel asks his father:

"daz ir mir gêbent ein wîp,
die mir wol gezême zuo der minne
über daz land zuo einer [edelen] küniginne;
der wolt ich morgengâben
mit herzogen und mit grâfen,
mit drîzehen künigrîchen." (195ff.)

Since Orendel intends to give his future bride thirteen kingdoms, the reader expects that he will either receive these lands from his father or set out to conquer them himself. In reality, however, he does neither. Orendel's bride is already in possession of her own realm, which she brings into her marriage.[37] In view of this fact, we can only conclude with Schröder: "Es wird also gleich zu Anfang deutlich, daß die alte Formel von der Brautgewinnung, um dem Lande eine Königin und einen Erben zu geben, blind dasteht."[38] Furthermore, although Orendel wins his bride, the marriage is never consummated. On the wedding night Orendel and Brîde receive a divine command to remain celibate. They retreat to the religious life until they are taken up into heaven. The reader quite logically wonders why the marriage has taken place if it is not to be consummated.

The second theme of the work, the Crusade theme, is also problematic. This theme, as Schröder notes, "klingt gleich im Ansatz ausdrücklich an: die Braut ist Herrin des Heiligen Grabes. Die Feinde, die ihr zu schaffen machen, sind die Heidenfürsten. Orendels gefährliche Unternehmung ist Kreuzfahrt . . . ."[39] Orendel's task is to free Jerusalem and to assure its subsequent safety. He accomplishes his mission, but at the end of the work the fate of Jerusalem is, surprisingly, no longer important. The couple's personal fate - their

eternal salvation - overshadows the Crusade theme. They go to heaven, "und was danach aus Jerusalem wird, um dessen Befreiung doch alles ging, kümmert den Dichter gar nicht."[40]

The third theme, the legend of the "Grauer Rock", is the most important theme of the work; the legend of the robe enables the author to demonstrate "was er unter der Bußgesinnung eines Heiligen versteht."[41] Orendel assumes the identity of the "Grauer Rock". He is known by that name almost from the first moment that he dons the robe. It is this identity, and not his identity as the son of the King of Trier, which is of primary importance, because it signals the fact that Orendel no longer acts on his own behalf. Instead, he has become an instrument for the fulfillment of the will of God. Having put on the robe, Orendel accomplishes nothing by virtue of his own ability and strength; on the contrary, heavenly powers guide his destiny. If he finds himself in a dangerous situation, a miracle invariably saves him. He prays to God for help, and help is granted, or Mary intercedes for him with her Son, and Christ sends an angel to take charge of the situation.

It is further evident from Orendel's identification with the "Grauer Rock" that the author's main intention is to portray a saint who is the model of humility and asceticism. For this reason the "Brautgewinnungsmotiv" and the Crusade theme fall by the wayside at the end of the work. The contrast between the protagonist of St. Oswald, who is also a saint, and Orendel makes clear the author's aim:

> Dort [in St. Oswald] ein königlicher
> Heiliger, mit Szepter und Krone an der
> Spitze einer Schar hochgeborener Vassalen,
> hier [in Orendel] ein demütiger Mönch in

> einen groben Mantel gehüllt, als ob er eben einem Kloster entronnen wäre . . . .[42]

Orendel should be dressed regally: "Wolte got, er wêr gekleidet gar/ in pfeller und in sablar" (1115f.); instead, he wears only a simple gray robe. When he becomes king of Jerusalem, his subjects can only wonder: "waz küniges mag daz wesen?" (1978). He willingly serves as the "Knecht" of a lowly, impoverished fisherman, yet it is he who rescues the sepulcher of Christ from the hands of the heathens and becomes lord of the Holy Land. These factors, along with his celibate marriage, show that he has become "der völlig mönchische Ritter"[43].

The pious tone of the work as well as the unusual portrayal of its hero reveal that it was the author's intention to write what Curschmann labels as a "reaktionäres Spielmannsepos"[44]. Curschmann states: "Der Verfasser des Orendel versuchte, der durch Epen wie Salman und Morolf, Rother oder Oswald vertretenen jüngsten Entwicklung der Literatur mit eigenen Mitteln entgegenzutreten."[45] Apparently dissatisfied with the new literary direction taken by the "Spielmannsepos", the author concentrated on writing a more pious, spiritual piece, one more akin to the "Geistlichendichtung" of the preceding era:

> Wir haben es nicht mit einem Gelegenheitsprodukt zu tun, sondern mit einem Werk, das die geistliche Literatur in einem viel offensichtlicheren Maß vertritt als die neue Wege beschreitenden anderen "Spielmannsepen".[46]

Since it is the author's intention to write "geistliche" rather than "weltliche" or "höfische" literature, and since his portrayal of Orendel as a monkish hero rather than as a courtly figure contributes

substantially to that end, it is quite logical that milte plays no role in the epic. We are not dealing with a piece of precourtly or courtly literature[47]; hence it is not surprising that the courtly virtue of milte is absent from the work. Orendel places himself in the position of a lowly servant of God and man; milte, as we have noted, is characteristic of a lord rather than of a servant. Furthermore, a leader wins fame and honor by exhibiting generosity; the humble Orendel seeks vastly more spiritual goals than these. It is evident, then, that we shall have to look to the other "Spielmannsepen" to gain a deeper understanding of the concept of milte.

2. Salman und Morolf. It is the consensus among literary critics that Salman und Morolf is the most representative work of its genre. In his discussion of the work, for example, Ehrismann observes:

> Das Spielmannsgedicht von Salman und Morolf stellt unter den verwandten Dichtungen die spielmännische Art am reinsten dar. Hier ist der niedere, volksmäßigere Geschmack am besten getroffen. Ergötzt und belustigt will dieses Publikum werden, es hat seine Freude an derberer Kost.[48]

Schröder affirms Ehrismann's assertion:

> Die Frage nach dem Thema der Erzählung ist schwierig zu beantworten. Das Schema der Brautgewinnung scheint lediglich der Anlaß für Verwicklungen der verschiedensten Art zu sein, die Wiederholung wirklich nur Häufung, der Sinn des Ganzen bloße Unterhaltung. Eben deswegen galt und gilt das Gedicht als Beispiel 'reiner' Spielmannsepik, d.h. als ein Handlungsgefüge, das nur den einen Sinn hat, den Typus des Spielmanns als solchen, vor allem in der Figur des Morolf, zur Geltung zu bringen . . . .[49]

The character of Morolf is clearly the focal point of the work. Re-

peatedly described as "der listige man", Morolf makes his way through a series of entertaining and fast-moving adventures, frequently using trickery, along with disguise, to facilitate the attainment of his goals. Because "Abenteuer und Schwänke", "Schelmenstücke und Betrügereien"[50] recur throughout the work, we might expect that courtliness - and with it the courtly virtue of milte - would play an insignificant role, if any, in the plot. The work is both "vorhöfisch" and "unhöfisch"[51], as Ehrismann correctly acknowledges. Nevertheless, it contains a number of features which are characteristic of courtly literature.[52] The treatment of milte is one of those features.

As in most of the previous works with which we have dealt, milte serves here both as a means of assuring the loyalty and devotion of a lord's men, even in perilous and potentially fatal situations, and as a way of rewarding them for faithful service. When, for example, Salman arrives with an army in Fore's kingdom to reclaim his wife, Morolf advises his brother to open up his storehouse of treasures and give generously to his men. Then, says Morolf, they will follow wherever the battle flag is carried.[53] Salman follows his brother's advice and is thus guaranteed of the steadfast service of his soldiers:

> Dô sprach der listige man
> 'gich, kunig, nû hâst dû rehte getân:
> dîn silber und dîn golt sô rôt
> daz wîset manigen [kûnen] recken in den
> verchgrimmen dôt.' (378)

After Salman's capture, Morolt urges his men to rescue their king, who is on his way to the gallows. He promises them both heavenly and earthly reward as an incentive (485). The rescue attempt is successful:

Salman is freed and Fore is hung instead. Fore's sister, who has allied herself with the Christians, advises Morolt to reward his men for their help, thereby securing their future loyalty: "'den gip dû krefticlîchen solt,/ so entwîchent sie dir nimer mê.'" (549)

The concept of milte assumes greater significance when it occurs as an attribute of a lord who willingly gives to the poorest of beggars simply for the sake of generosity rather than for the sake of honor or in the hope of receiving something in return. Several examples of such disinterested generosity occur in the epic. Morolf, for example, appears before his brother in the guise of an elderly Jew and asks: "'durch aller frouwen êre/ mache mich dîns gûtes rîch'" (164). Salman's response to his brother, whom he does not recognize, is indicative of genuine milte:

> 'durch die freude die ich von frouwen hân
> gibe ich dir [mîns] gûtes nit zû vil.
> wilt du ez durch got von himele,
> mîn gût ich mit dir teilen wil.' (165)

Salman gives him gold and even hands over his ring, which Morolf also requests of him (166f.). Disguised as a pilgrim, Morolf later appears before Salme and asks her for a gift. She promises to guarantee that he will be fed: "'ich gibe dir wîn unde brôt,/ daz dich dâ von nieman scheidet, ez entuo dan unser eines dôt.'" (206) The same situation is repeated when Salman, also disguised as a pilgrim, appears before Fore's sister and asks her for a gift. She makes the same promise to him that Salme had made to Morolf (401). It is true that these incidents take place within the context of "List"; nevertheless, they also serve to illustrate milte in its purest form.

Ehrismann notes that a naïve conception of the relationship between the people and their princes is inherent in the work.[54] This naïveté is most clearly apparent in the generosity which Princian displays towards Morolf, who appears at his court disguised as an impoverished, crippled beggar. Morolt has the gatekeeper fetch Princian, who appears before him with a retinue of his knights. Morolt attempts to bow to the king, but Princian, seeing that he is crippled, absolves him of that necessity and promises to feed him for as long as he wishes to remain at the court. He also gives Morolt a substantial sum of money so that he can purchase the medicine which he claims to need in order to cure his affliction. Princian's compassion is so great that he himself helps Morolt to mount his mule; when Morolt falls into a ditch, the king comes to his rescue and again places him on the animal (639ff.).

Princian's ready accessibility to the most impoverished of individuals in his realm, as well as his generosity and compassion, is more characteristic of myth and fantasy than of reality. As Ehrismann notes:

> Das sind freilich Idealzustände für Bettler, aber doch ist diese phantasievolle Ausschmückung ein sprechendes Beispiel für die auf dem Gebote der Nächstenliebe beruhende Pflege der Armen und Kranken im Mittelalter, ein Bild für diese schönste soziale Tugend des Christentums, für ihre Erfüllung durch den gütigen Fürsten . . . .[55]

Ehrismann further accounts for the positive portrayal of the nobility by recalling that the authors of these epics, whose livelihood depended to a very large extent upon the generosity of their patrons, measured greatness exclusively with the yardstick of material advantage. In

order to gain the patron's favor, the authors resorted to flattery, portraying them as models of generosity.[56]

Salman und Morolf provides us with a significant insight into the true nature of milte. Although milte functions in the work within the context of "Dienst-Lohn" as a means of securing loyalty and as a reward for services rendered, it goes beyond these narrow bounds to encompass true compassion and disinterested generosity. This deeper meaning of the word anticipates the courtly concept of milte which is elaborated in the literature written at the height of the courtly period.

3. Herzog Ernst. While Salman und Morolf is considered to be the "purest" or most representative example of its genre, Herzog Ernst is perhaps the least typical "Spielmannsepos", which accounts for the disagreement among critics over its proper classification. Ehrismann labels Herzog Ernst as an early courtly epic. He observes that its language is less "formelhaft" than that of the "Spielmannsepen" and that the meter is more refined and controlled. He also notes that the work avoids "die spielmännische Burleske, das Possenhafte und Rohe"[57]. Schröder, on the other hand, maintains that the work belongs to the "Spielmann" genre. He acknowledges that the style of version B was clearly influenced by Wolfram's Parzival and Ulrich von Zazikhoven's Lanzelet[58], but at the same time he denies that it received a genuine infusion of courtly spirit from these works: ". . . es bleibt bei der Verwendung eines modischen Vokabulars."[59] Although Schröder is correct in his classification of Herzog Ernst as a "Spielmannsepos"[60], it is questionable whether the appearance of courtly traits in the work can be

attributed solely to the usage of fashionable vocabulary. Several features of the work, such as the portrayal of Ernst as an exemplary knight of courtly dimensions[61], suggest an approach towards true courtliness. The role which milte plays also lends courtly stature to the work.

In many respects the concept of milte occurs in Herzog Ernst with the same meaning and function that it had in the previous works which we have discussed. In almost every instance in which the concept appears, however, it is implicit rather than explicit. The word itself rarely occurs in the work, but frequent examples of milte, particularly as generosity on the part of a lord, can be found. Herzog Ernst is thus perhaps the best example of a work in which milte, despite the important role which it plays, is simply taken for granted.

Throughout the epic, milte occurs implicitly as an attribute of Ernst; in most of these instances it denotes generosity. Ehrismann notes: "Ein warmer Gemütston ist den harten Taten beigemischt durch die Treue, die den Fürsten mit den Mannen verbindet."[62] This warm tone is evoked in large measure by Ernst's genuine concern for his men, which he expresses by means of generosity. The fourfold motivation for Ernst's generosity is revealed in the following passage, which describes the manner in which he treats his followers:

> der phlac er wol ze rehte:
> er gap in schatz und gewant.
> mit sîner willigen hant
> machte er im die werlt holt.
> er ensparte silber noch daz golt
> von keinen sînen êren.
> des wurden dem vil hêren
> mit triwen bereit sîne man
> swa ez an die nôt solde gan.[63]

It is clear from this quotation that Ernst is truly interested in the welfare of his people. Milte is first and foremost an expression of the care and concern which he feels for them and demonstrates on other occasions as well.[64] It is his duty to provide for their well-being, and he does so by means of willing generosity. His generosity also wins him the "Huld" or favor, friendship and good will of its recipients.[65] Furthermore, a display of milte increases the honor and recognition which is accorded him. In an earlier passage milte has the same function: "beidiu durch êre und durch got/ teilte er swaz er mohte hân" (98f.). It is interesting to note that milte occurs here within the context of "Gott und der Welt gefallen", which is the ultimate aim of the courtly knight. By means of generosity Ernst not only wins earthly honor but pleases God as well. Finally, milte strengthens the bond between Ernst and his men so that they are willing to serve him even under adverse circumstances.[66]

The Emperor Otto is also characterized as milte, as are a number of other rulers in the work.[67] Otto is responsible for the welfare of the entire realm, and he fulfills that responsibility admirably, as we see in the "Fürstenspiegel" which describes him:

> er was ein edel ritter guot.
> in kunde ze rehte erbarmen
> die rîchen und die armen.
> alle die des geruochten
> die sîn helfe suochten,
> den was sîn gâbe vil bereit. (228ff.)

To win the favor and loyalty of his step-son Ernst, Otto displays great generosity towards him (580ff.; 640ff.). Although Otto is not depicted as a flawless individual - he believes false accusations of

treason on the part of Ernst without seeking proof of the allegations - he is immediately ready to forgive Ernst's subsequent rebellion against him when he learns that the charges were slanderous. As a gesture of good will and reconciliation, he generously restores all that he had taken away from Ernst (5753ff.; 5958f.).

As in the Eneide, milte forms an integral part of the "hochzît". At Otto's wedding feast the emperor distributes costly gifts to his knights and also displays generosity toward the "Fahrenden". The result of his generosity is increased joy on the part of all his guests (500ff.). Similarly, after Ernst defeats the "Langohren", he arranges a celebration for his men, at which he gives them "schatz und gewant" (4895). Ernst himself is the recipient of riches at the festivities which the King of Arimaspe holds in his honor after the former had defeated the king's enemies, the people of Canaan (5281ff.). Although the generosity displayed at the various celebrations in the work is not described in as much detail as it is in the Eneide, its inclusion is a sign of the author's concern for the concept of courtliness.

We noted above that the epic portrays Ernst as an exemplary courtly knight. Although this is true to a very large extent, Ernst, like his step-father who judges him rashly and erroneously, is not without fault. By his rebellion against the emperor, Ernst acquires a heavy load of guilt, for which he must do penance by exercising milte in the broadest sense of the word. The first half of the work deals with Ernst's relationship to the emperor, a relationship which begins in the greatest affection and harmony and deteriorates because of the

calumny of the emperor's envious nephew and counselor, the Pfalzgraf Heinrich; the second half, in contrast, deals with Ernst's journey to the Orient, which, as Schröder notes, is "Reckenfahrt und Bußfahrt zugleich"[68]. Ernst's adventures on his way to the Orient constitute an unbroken chain of compassion and aid for the oppressed. He rescues a captive Indian princess from the "Schnabelmenschen", thrice saves his friend, the King of Arimaspe, from his enemies (the "Plattfüße", "Langohren" and "Giganten"), and defends the helpless pygmies against their more powerful oppressors. By acting compassionately in defense of the weak and oppressed and by willingly accepting all the tribulations which befall him, Ernst atones for his actions and merits forgiveness of the emperor.

For the most part, we do not gain any new and significant insight into the nature of milte from Herzog Ernst. Its occurrence as an attribute of Ernst, Otto and other rulers lends courtly stature to the men, just as its inclusion in the various descriptions of the "hochzît" signals concern for "das Höfische". Significant, however, is the fact that milte as compassion for the oppressed and action on their behalf predominates in the second half of the work. Such compassion is capable of eradicating guilt and ennobling the individual who practices it.

4. St. Oswald. The epic St. Oswald[69] provides us with a work in which milte is a central motif. At the very beginning of the work the author informs us of his intention to tell the story "von deme miltisten man/ sô êr daz leben ie gewan"[70]. Oswald is described as "der milte"

thirty-five times in the epic[71], and it is this quality which has to do in large measure with his elevation to sainthood. The concept of milte in the epic is also significant because it is inextricably interwoven with the concept of êre. While previous works have shown us, without elaboration, that a relationship exists between milte and êre, St. Oswald makes that relationship vividly apparent.

Like Orendel, St. Oswald deals with three themes: the seeking of a bride ("Brautwerbung"), the conversion of the heathens, and the saintliness of Oswald. Here, as in Orendel, the third theme completely overshadows the other two by the end of the work. As Schröder notes, "Das Ziel hat im Laufe der Erzählung gewechselt, es interessiert nur noch das persönliche Schicksal Orendels und seiner Gattin . . . ."[72] Motivated by the need of an heir for his enormous kingdom (45ff.), Oswald initially sets out to win Pamige as his bride. Having won her, however, he leads a life of total celibacy. The importance of producing an heir is totally forgotten; similarly, no mention is made of the fate of Oswald's people during and after the couple's two years of celibacy and service of God which precede their assumption into heaven. The missionary theme also fades into the background. Schröder reminds us of the significant fact that Oswald's father-in-law Aron, having embraced Christianity, does not return to his country to promote the spread of his new-found faith, as he does in the Wiener Oswald.[73] It is clear, then, that the real theme of the work is the third one: "Aus dem Weltmenschen König Oswald wird der Heilige Oswald: den Vorgang dieser 'Entwicklung' will die Erzählung darstellen, das ist das Thema."[74]

At the beginning of the epic, the "Weltmensch" Oswald is portrayed as a powerful leader. Curschmann calls attention to this fact:

> Die Umschreibung des Herrschaftsbereiches ist auffallend prägnant. Wo der Rother summarisch 72 Könige nennt (Roth. 7), unterscheidet der Münchener Oswald steigernd unter 72 weltlichen Lehensträgern 12 Könige, 24 Herzöge und 36 Grafen und fügt noch 9 Bischöfe hinzu. Daß Oswald im Bereich weltlicher Herrschaft zu Hause ist, wird überdies mehrfach hervorgehoben (91 ff., 943 ff., 1483 ff., 1557 ff.).[75]

Oswald's power, his devotion to God and his desire for a wife - "also ere, got und minne"[76] - are all mentioned at the beginning of the work, but they are not of equal importance: The "minne"-motif takes second place to the motif of honor.[77] Having decided that he wishes to marry, Oswald assembles his people to seek their advice; when they arrive, he holds a banquet for them at which his honor is very much evident:

> sant Oswaldes êre die wâren grôz,
> den hêrren man dô wazzer bôt,
> sant Oswald hûsêre nie vergaz,
> mit den hêrren er ze tische saz . . . . (119ff.)

In discussing this significant passage, Curschmann observes: "ere ist synonym mit husere, ist die Oswalds wesentlichen Charakterzug, die milte, tragende Haltung."[78] The meaning of milte and êre requires careful definition at this point: "milte bedeutet Freigebigkeit als Ausfluß der richeit; ere umfaßt daher zunächst . . . lediglich 'die mit der Ehrenstellung verbundene aristokratische Lebensführung', oder besser: -haltung."[79] It is clear that êre denotes first and foremost the external honor and recognition accorded Oswald by his people and only secondly his inner worth or personal integrity. The former is the

predominant concept of honor in the "Spielmannsepik", as Ehrismann notes:

> Die Hofsitte verlangt, daß der Fürst nâch êren, standesgemäß in der von dem Hofzeremoniell vorgeschriebenen Weise auftritt, die Hofetikette bewahrt, seine Vassallen würdig behandelt und reich ausstattet . . . .[80]

Oswald fulfills these requirements perfectly, as the above quotation from the text indicates. The banquet scene closes with the following lines, which also serve to underscore Oswald's honorable conduct:

> der edele vurste wolgetân
> begunde mit den hêrren wirtschaft hân,
> volliclichen zwelf tac
> er ir mit grôzen êren pflac. (133ff.)

We mentioned above that Oswald's milte has to do in large measure with his sainthood, yet milte exercised solely for the sake of winning honor and recognition or for the sake of conforming to conventional etiquette is hardly sufficient grounds for canonization. Milte assumes quite a different function at a later juncture in the text when it becomes the substance of a promise made to God in exchange for His help. Having set out to sea with his bride, Oswald is pursued by her irate father, who leads a vast army in the hope of regaining his daughter. The situation of the Christians appears hopeless; divine intervention alone can save them. Recognizing this, Oswald pledges his triuwe to God and asks for divine assistance for himself and his followers with the following promise:

> Er sprach: 'himlischer trahtîn
> nû nim hin die triuwe mîn,
> daz mich ûf ertrîche kein man
> niemer mêre nihtis gebiten kan:

wes er durch dînen willen begert
her got, des wirt er alles gewert:
er bitte mich umbe bürge oder umbe lant,
wes er mich durch dînen willen ermant,
und baete er mich umbe daz houbet mîn,
ich gaebe im ez durch den willen dîn!
unde hilf mir mit êren
hin von deme heidnischen hêrren,
daz ich niht kome ze leide
hie von dem wilden heiden!' (2791ff.)

The commonplace epic formula "durch aller frouwen êre" is replaced here by the threefold usage of "durch dînen willen"[81], which can best be translated as "in Your name" or "for Your sake". Whether or not Oswald keeps this pledge made under duress will be the real test of his character. It will reveal whether he possesses genuine triuwe - loyalty to God as well as to his own word - and êre in the deeper sense of the word, as inner worth and integrity.

Oswald is put to the test upon his return home, after divine intervention has enabled him to defeat the heathens in battle. Upon concluding a victory celebration, Oswald sends messengers into the realm to assemble the poor so that he can make good his pledge by giving them "ein spende/ mit sîner milten hende" (3212f.). Among the throngs of impoverished individuals who accept Oswald's invitation is Christ Himself, disguised as a needy pilgrim. The purpose of His appearance is made explicitly clear:

dô wolte er beruochen
unde sant Oswalden versuochen,
obe ime wolte leisten der yurste guot,
daz er ime hete verheizen ûf des wilden meres
vluot. (3220ff.)

The needy go forward in nine different groups to receive Oswald's gifts; the pilgrim, however, not satisfied to accompany only one group,

joins all nine, thereby amassing considerable goods. When all the alms are spent and the crowds disperse, the pilgrim is still not content, for Oswald has not yet been tested to his limits. Again the pilgrim appears before the king, this time with a request for food. Oswald's retainers are angered by this audacious plea; they quickly point out to their king that the greedy pilgrim has already accumulated sufficient goods to last him half a year. Undaunted by their remarks, Oswald graciously grants the pilgrim's request and departs for the banquet.

The test has not yet ended, however. Here, as at the beginning of the work, the banquet scene is repeated. The description of the banquet scene closely parallels that of the earlier one (compare 3292ff. to 119ff.); this time, however, no mention is made of Oswald's honor until the pilgrim Christ appears on the scene.[82] The depth of Oswald's honor is soon to become apparent. When Oswald's people see that the pilgrim has again dared to appear before their king, their anger increases to the point of wrath and total indignation. With shoves and blows they attempt to drive Him from the king's sight. Perceiving the situation, Oswald leaps up from the table, takes the pilgrim by the hand and bids Him be seated beside him. Whatever the pilgrim asks of him "durch die êre dîn" (3329) or for the sake of God (3347) is willingly granted. Initially the requests are relatively modest in nature - fine food, a goblet and a linen cloth (3330ff.) - , but they build to a dramatic climax when the pilgrim asks Oswald for all his land, his scepter and his crown. Attached to the request is a significant reminder: "'ein künic sîn triuwe leisten sol,/ von gote wirt

ez vergolten wol.'" (3423f.) The penultimate test of his triuwe and êre has come. Oswald responds by placing himself "völlig unter Gottes Gebot und Gesetz"[83] and granting the request:

> 'got hat ez allez in sîneme gewalt:
> mîn triuwe leiste ich sâ zehant,
> ich gibe dir ûf bürge unde lant.' (3425ff.)

When the pilgrim declares that He needs a queen - Oswald's queen - to help Him rule so vast a realm, the ultimate test is made. It, too, is passed. Oswald relinquishes his wife to the pilgrim and asks for His garb; he will now become a pilgrim in foreign lands:

> 'rîchtuom wil ich mîden
> unde willicliîchen lîden
> smaehe unde armuot,
> unze got sîn genâde an mir tuot.' (3456ff.)

Only as Oswald prepares to depart from his kingdom as the poorest and most abject of men does the pilgrim reveal His divine identity, restoring to Oswald all that He had taken from him.

It is clear that what we have witnessed at the end of the work is "die Läuterung der ere durch milte"[84], as Curschmann so aptly remarks. In order to keep the promise which he had made to God, Oswald must divest himself of everything that brings him external honor, or the recognition and admiration of his people - land, crown and queen. But by doing so, he proves that he possesses the infinitely more important inner honor, or worth, dignity and integrity as a human being. His êre goes far beyond the mere observance of the niceties of courtly etiquette. We must fully agree with Curschmann, who takes issue with Gertrud Schmid's interpretation of the climax of the work:

> Keinesfalls ist die Weggabe von Krone, Land
> und Frau als eine Steigerung der "Mildtätigkeit

> des Helden . . . zur mönchischen Tugend freiwilliger Armut" (GERTRUD SCHMID S. 124) aufzufassen. Die Pointe lautet vielmehr: in der Schlußsteigerung der milte ist nicht mehr milte entscheidend, sondern die Unterwerfung unter die Gott gegenüber bestehende Verpflichtung.[85]

By keeping his promise to God at the greatest personal cost imaginable, Oswald shows that his triuwe is absolute. Such triuwe in the realm of man is sainthood.

5. König Rother. If we compare St. Oswald to König Rother, we notice that these works share at least two important similarities in regard to the concept of milte. First of all, milte is a predominant characteristic of the protagonist in both works. While Oswald is explicitly described as "der milte", however, Rother's milte is largely implicit. The reasons for this contrast merit consideration. Secondly, in Rother as in Oswald, milte is inseparably related to the concept of êre. That Rother possesses êre is an incontrovertible fact which the author stresses from the very beginning of the epic. Because êre has both a superficial and a deeper meaning - a fact which Oswald makes vividly clear - , we shall have to determine whether Rother possesses only external honor or whether he also has the inner honor, worth and integrity which characterizes Oswald. These questions can best be answered by turning first to the theme of the work, which can be accurately summarized by quoting Curschmann: "Das Problem weltlicher Macht und Herrschaft personifiziert sich in Rother."[86]

In the opening lines of the epic, the author calls attention not only to Rother's honor but also to his power and sovereignty. These three factors are intricately related throughout the work. Rother

resides in Bari "mit vil grozen erin"[87]. Seventy-two monarchs are subject to him (the same number that is subject to Oswald), and he is described as

> . . . der aller heriste man.
> der da zv rome (.)
> [ie] intfinc die cronen. (10ff.)

Only one thing is lacking to make his honor and dominion perfect: an heir to the throne. For this reason, i.e., for the sake of his honor, Rother must seek a bride. In contrast to Oswald, which relegates two of its three major themes to the background, Rother develops its one basic theme consistently from beginning to end. Schröder stresses the importance of this fact:

> Das familiäre Ereignis der Brautgewinnung hat . . . politisch-historische Bedeutung. Es wird auf den geschichtlichen Raum des Römischen Reiches bezogen und erhält daher seine zeitgemäße Aktualität: Rother ist der sagenhafte Vorfahre Pippins und Karls (dessen legitimer Nachfolger gegenwärtig in der Person Barbarossas regiert). Die erfolgreiche Werbung um die einzige Tochter des byzantinischen Herrschers, des Herrn von Ostrom, begründet die unbestrittene Vorherrschaft des römisch-deutschen Kaisertums in der Christenheit. Damit ist die vordem zwiespältige Welt geeint und ihr Fortbestand gesichert.[88]

Because Rother is such a powerful king, only the daughter of a man like Constantine, who is nearly Rother's equal in power and dominion, can be considered as a choice for a marriage partner. The question of ^ere is uppermost in Rother's mind in reaching a decision about his future queen; when he asks Liupolt to act as his messenger to Constantine, he does so with the words "vñ hilf mir miner | erin." (112)

As soon as Rother has decided upon Constantine's daughter for his wife, his riches begin to play an important role in the plot. Rother, who is described as "der riche" on numerous occasions, puts his vast wealth to use for the attainment of his goal. It is said of the eleven men who will accompany Liupolt on his journey to Constantinople:

> sie waren | dem kuninge [Rother] alle holt.
> Daz machete silber | vñ golt.
> Daz er in kuninliche gap. (146ff.)

Before the men depart, Rother assures them that he will reward them royally for their services:

> er sprach suvil vver danne wil scaz | nemen.
> deme salichin ane zale geben.
> wil er | aber burge vñ lant.
> Des gibich ime in | sine gewalt.
> vnz indes seluen dunket | uil.
> we gerne ich daz don wil.
> uñ helfe | ime daz beherten.
> mit mines silbes su- | verte. (190ff.)

Although the word milte is used in neither of these instances, it is implicit in Rother's attitude towards his vassals. Here, as in most of the other works with which we have dealt, milte clearly functions within the context of "Dienst-Lohn". It is an essential virtue of a lord, who is obliged to reward his men for services which they render him. By so doing, he strengthens the bond of triuwe between him and his people. Ehrismann accurately summarizes this aspect of milte:

> . . . triuwe ist nicht nur ein ideales Gemüts-verhältnis, sondern eine habhafte Forderung der Wirklichkeit, eine Verpflichtung zu realen Leistungen, ein Vertrag zwischen dem Herrn und dem Mann. Der Vasall war zu Hoffahrt (zu Beratungen, Gerichtstagen, Festlichkeiten) und Heerfahrt verpflichtet, der Herr gewährte ihm dafür den Rechtsschutz, belohnte ihn mit Ländereien, Grundbesitz und Gerechtsamen und

> mußte überhaupt seine Dienste lohnen durch Geschenke, Schatzspenden, Anteil an der Kriegsbeute u. dergl.[89]

In addition to milte as a necessary virtue of a lord, there is another type of milte at work in the epic, a type which Ehrismann aptly labels "spielmännische Freigebigkeit"[90]. Throughout the first half of the epic, milte is used as part of the "List"with which Rother attempts to win his bride. He sends messengers to Constantinople richly laden with every type of treasure imaginable. The wealth which they display there is meant not only to favorably impress Constantine and his people but also to win their favor. When Liupolt arrives at his destination, he asks a merchant to tend his ship while he goes to see the king. The reward for this small service, a coat, constitutes extraordinary generosity, as the merchant's response indicates:

> dri tage uñ nacht.
> hodich dir sprach der| kovfman.
> suvar du wilt riten oder gan.
> Daz| weiz der waldindinger got.
> Der mer zo le-| bene gebot.
> Du has mir so kuninliche ge| geben.
> ich wil diner schiffe wol mit trwen| plegen. (211ff.)

Liupolt's generosity foreshadows the generosity which Rother himself displays when he arrives in Constantine's kingdom.

Rother's trip to Constantinople is necessitated by the fact that his messengers have been imprisoned by Constantine, who refuses to give his daughter to any man. To do so would involve the sharing of his power, since a son-in-law would one day inherit his kingdom. But Constantine clearly wishes to retain his power and his realm for himself alone[91]; hence he imprisons anyone who dares to broach the subject

of marriage to his daughter. As time passes, Rother realizes that ill fate has befallen his messengers. Greatly saddened by their misfortune[92], he assembles his counselors to decide how he might best rescue his men. It is agreed that Rother should travel "mit grozen erin./ inreckewis over mer" (553f.) and that he should use his wealth to enlist the aid of the best men in the realm for his endeavor[93]. As part of the "List" involved in the undertaking, Rother will tell Constantine that he is the "Recke" Dietrich who was driven from the court of Rother. His plan is truly ingenious: When Constantine and his people see the enormous wealth of the "Recke" Dietrich, they will realize how much richer Rother is.

From the moment that Rother begins to prepare for his journey until he frees his men and wins his bride, the "spielmännische Freigebigkeit" of which Ehrismann speaks becomes predominant. Rother loads his ships with gold and countless treasures, and he summons goldsmiths to go with him on the trip (779ff.). When he arrives in Constantinople, twelve wagons are needed to unload his treasures: "Die gingen| sibin nacht geladene./ Sie trogin golt vñ schaz." (1029f.) This display of wealth is part of Rother's "List"; it is clearly intended to impress the inhabitants of Constantine's kingdom. But it has two far more important purposes: It will serve to demonstrate Rother's <u>êre</u> and to win him the loyalty of Constantine's subjects. When Constantine's men see the rich, splendid and elegant appearance of Rother-Dietrich and his retinue (1084ff.) - an appearance which is an obvious display of <u>riche</u> and <u>êre</u> - they cannot refrain from making the following significant comment:

> Dise rekken sin alle riche.
> wer leven bosliche.
> daz wir dienin eime zagin. (1114ff.)

The fact that they describe Constantine, their king, with the pejorative term "zage" is indicative of the extent to which Rother's "List" is succeeding.

Rother is not content to merely display his wealth, however; in order to achieve his goals, he must distribute it as well. As Curschmann observes:

> Die ere, die Rother nun am Hofe Konstantins vertritt, äußert sich in der riche, die ein persönliches Attribut Rothers darstellt, zugleich aber in Handlung umgesetzt wird. Nicht nur im prächtigen Aufzug der Boten und des Gefolges stellt sie sich dar, sondern sie bestimmt - steigernd und gliedernd - den ganzen Handlungsablauf.[94]

After Rother's successful demonstration that he is richer than Constantine,[95] Rother begins to share his wealth with those who need it most. In a passage of more than 250 lines (1251-1514), the author describes the mercy and generosity of Rother and his men towards impoverished knights who seek their aid: "Wol entfengen sie die armen./ Ande lezzin sich ere not erbarmen." (1295f.) Whatever the poor request of them is willingly granted: food and drink, clothing, horses, arms and even money. Significantly, however, the word milte never occurs in this long passage, which implicitly portrays Rother as the embodiment of that virtue. Curschmann accurately states the reasons for its absence: "Während der Oswald auf diesen besonderen objektiven wie subjektiven Zweck der riche, die Entäußerung hinsteuert, bestätigt

Rother durch milte sein riche."[96] Milte is primarily a means of demonstrating Rother's wealth; it is part of a "List", which explains why the author does not use the word milte to describe Rother's compassion and generosity. It is a means to an end, and it brings about the desired end very effectively. Upon witnessing Rother-Dietrich's generosity, the queen expresses her regret to Constantine that he refused to give their daughter to Rother (1455ff.); Constantine's men, in turn, declare:

> Nu | dunkit vns bezzere.
> Nu des nicht ne mach | ir gan.
> Daz wer werden dietherchis man.|
> her gevet vns vromeliche
> Vñ mach it uns|| alle riche. (1472ff.)

Although Rother does not need the services of the recipients of his generosity at this point - he and his bride are able to escape without a conflict - , his generosity helps to save him in the second half of the work. When Constantine uses trickery to regain his daughter, Rother sets out to reclaim her. The second part of the work thus parallels the first. In Rother's second "Brautwerbung", however, a number of significant changes are made. This time Rother goes to Constantinople with a considerably larger force than before. Once again his generosity wins him the willing service of his men:

> War sint nu sprach asprian.
> Mines herren | rotheres man.
> Den he hie sin got gafe.|
> Vnde den creftigen scaz.
> Nu bedarf her | an der node.
> Do drungin helede gote.|
> Vaste zo deme ringe.
> Unde herven manich | lant recth.
> Dar louete manich got kienc|
> Rothere deme richen.

Harde vrumeliche.|
Quemez ime an die not.
Sie rieden mit || ime an den dot. (3371ff.)

Thirty thousand loyal soldiers set out with their generous leader to reclaim their queen.

When Rother arrives in Constantinople, he learns that the heathen Ymelot has conquered the realm. At that very moment the wedding of Rother's wife to Ymelot's son is being celebrated. In the first half of the work, the Christian ruler Constantine was the adversary; now Rother is faced with a heathen opponent. Disguised as a humble pilgrim (not as a powerful "Recke" as before), Rother goes to the wedding banquet, reveals his true identity and allows himself to be taken prisoner. He is sentenced to death at the gallows. The citizens of Constantinople remember Rother's generosity, however, and they come to his rescue until his own army arrives and intervenes:

Sie wunnin| eine herliche schare.
Vunf dusint wole ||gare.
Die woldin alle den lib geven.
Sene | losten rothere daz leven. (4076ff.)

Rother's life is saved, and he is able to rescue his wife and return with her to his kingdom. Upon his return, he richly rewards his men for their services (4085ff.), even though they protest that he has already given them enough (4811f.).

In his analysis of the epic, Schröder observes that Rother deserves to win Constantine's daughter because he is clearly superior to his father-in-law. Schröder asserts that the author demonstrates Rother's superiority

> . . . durch die moralischen Eigenschaften Rothers: er ist politisch klug, diplomatisch geschickt und hat die Vasallen durch seine Rechtlichkeit und seine Freigebigkeit auf seine Seite. Er hat, mit einem Satz, alle Tugenden, die ein christlicher Regent haben soll.[97]

To demonstrate this fact, Schröder argues, and to show "die beiden Seiten des christlichen Herrschaftsgedankens",[98] the author repeats the first half of the epic with certain modifications: Rother of the first part epitomizes strength, Rother of the second, humility. His enemy is first the Christian Constantine, then the heathen Ymelot. The epic begins "heldisch" and ends "christlich-historisch".[99] For twenty-two years Rother rules honorably; then he turns over his power to Pippin, his son (the father of Charlemagne) and retreats to a monastery, where he spends the rest of his days. He realizes, says Schröder, that all earthly power comes from God and must be returned to God.[100]

The conclusion of the work reveals that Rother possesses the inner honor and integrity which also characterize Oswald. Rother rules as long as is necessary and appropriate; when his son comes of age, Rother is content to relinquish his powers and all that brings him worldly honor and recognition in order to lead a life of prayer and humility. The end of his life represents a marked contrast to his earlier life of external honor. Rother's milte was largely associated with that external honor. It was principally a means to an end: the winning of a bride for the sake of honor and the freeing of his men for the sake of triuwe. At the end of the work milte is no longer of primary concern.

D. Conclusions

At the beginning of this chapter we posed three basic questions about the concept of milte which could only be answered by examining several of the most important works of precourtly and early courtly literature. First of all, we asked whether the three basic connotations of milte in early Germanic languages and literatures - an attitude of love and concern for one's subjects or one's fellow man, mercy or compassion, and generosity - underwent any significant change and development, or whether the early meanings of the word persisted unchanged. For the most part, the meaning of milte did not change significantly in the works which preceded the great epics of the late twelfth and beginning thirteenth century. In the works which we discussed, the word milte continued to be used with the three basic connotations which we encountered in early Germanic literature. Only in Salman und Morolf was the word used in a way which clearly foreshadowed the later concept of milte: giving solely for the sake of generosity, without the hope or expectation of receiving something in return. In all the other works with which we dealt, the meaning of milte was not profoundly transformed or deepened. Furthermore, whenever the word was used, its meaning was taken for granted. Nowhere did we find an attempt on the part of an author to define the concept of milte or to elaborate on its implications.

Secondly, we asked how important a role the concept of milte played in precourtly and early courtly literature. The two versions of the Alexanderlied which we discussed shed light on that question. In the

Vorauer Alexander, written around the year 1150, milte played a minimal role; in the Strassburger Alexander, however, which was written approximately ten years later, the ruthless barbarian conqueror of version (V) was transformed into a more refined and humane figure who displayed generosity and even magnanimity towards those whom he had vanquished. The fact that the later version of the epic added the dimension of milte to the hero's character is noteworthy; it is an indication of the author's attempt to appeal to an audience whose taste was becoming increasingly more refined and courtly. The new dimension in Alexander's character also points to a significant trend in the literature of the period. The more closely we approach the thirteenth century, the more important the concept of milte becomes. If we consider the minor role of milte in the Rolandslied as compared to its repeated occurrence and greater significance in later works like the Eneide or König Rother and Herzog Ernst, it becomes evident that milte was considered with greater consciousness by the later authors of the period. Even though the concept was never defined, it appeared with ever-increasing frequency and played an ever greater role in character depiction and in plot as time progressed.

Finally, we asked about the relationship of milte to its antithesis, the vice of greed. We found that greed was viewed as a particularly deplorable vice both in the Rolandslied and in the Eneide. Greed was in part responsible for the tragic fate of Genelun, and it alone precipitated the death of Turnus, who was in all other respects an admirable figure. As in the case of milte, however, we found no attempt to

elaborate on the nature of erge, nor did we encounter digressions about its dire consequences. Greed, like milte, was simply taken for granted. Furthermore, when the phenomenon of erge appeared in these earlier works, it was not explicitly contrasted to milte. The tendency of later authors to consciously juxtapose milte and erge for the sake of contrast was absent from the works which we discussed.

In considering the meaning and role of milte in representative works which precede the masterpieces of Middle High German literature, we did not adhere to strict chronological order. Herzog Ernst, for example, - despite the uncertainty about its date - was most probably written after the first decade of the thirteenth century,[101] yet we discussed it before such works as Erec (ca. 1180-85) and Iwein (ca. 1200). We chose to avoid strict chronological order for a significant reason. The definition of what constitutes the literature of the "Blütezeit" or of the "erste große klassische Periode der deutschen Literatur"[102] cannot be based solely on chronology. Such a definition must instead be determined by a close analysis of style, form and treatment of theme. The following chapter will therefore consider the works in which the spirit of courtliness is clearly articulated and where the translation of that spirit into action is the essence of the plot.

CHAPTER III

MILTE IN THE COURTLY EPIC

Beginning with the Eneide of Heinrich von Veldeke, who was one of the first German authors to express a new attitude towards the concepts of knighthood and courtliness, a refinement of artistic form and thought gradually made its impression felt in Germany. It is because of that refinement that the "Blütezeit" of Middle High German literature may appropriately be called the courtly period.[1]

Literary scholarship has devoted much effort to a description of the high degree of perfection in form which is one of the most outstanding characteristics of courtly prose and poetry. It can be noted, for example, that as the culture of the French courts began to exert an ever more powerful influence on the German aristocracy, the courtly language of Germany assimilated significant items of French vocabulary. Furthermore, terms such as "recke", "ellen", "degen" and "balt" which frequently appeared in the epics of the previous generations gradually came to be regarded as antiquated; consequently, they were retained for the most part only in the heroic epic, which dealt with "alten maeren", and, in a somewhat different context, in the "dörperliche Dichtung", as exemplified by the writings of Neithart. Greater regularity in rhyme and rhythm was also characteristic of the literature of the courtly period. A regular alternation of stressed and unstressed syllables, the so-called "alternierender Rhythmus", became predominant, and the "Assonanzen" found in the literature of previous generations were replaced by what we now consider to be "pure" rhymes.

More important than the preoccupation with artistic form, however, was the concern of courtly authors with the articulation of the ideals and aspirations of their times. Those ideals can best be subsumed under the heading of "curtoisie" or "höveschеit". As DeBoor so aptly notes, "hövesch" is "ein Qualitätsbegriff, genauer gesagt, ein Bildungsbegriff, eine menschliche Stilform."[2] The term "hövesch" originally pertained to the man who belonged to the royal court. As the writers of the time began to think more deeply and profoundly about the meaning of such key terms, however, the word "hövesch" assumed a new and more significant dimension. It was no longer sufficient merely to belong to the court of a prince to be considered "hövesch"; one had to possess certain inner qualities such as zuht, mâze and milte - qualities which courtly society considered essential in its members if they were to fulfill their prescribed role. In the words of DeBoor:

> Ihrer ständischen Struktur nach ist diese Gesellschaft eine ritterliche Gesellschaft, daher kann sich nur ein ritterlicher Mann die höfischen Qualitäten erwerben. Aber nicht jeder Ritter ist in diesem Sinne höfisch; der bloße Landjunker oder Haudegen ist zwar seinem Stande nach Ritter, seiner Qualität nach aber ist er nicht Glied jener bildungsmäßig herausgehobenen Schicht, sondern "dörper".[3]

Aesthetic considerations were, of course, very important to the authors of the courtly period, as DeBoor emphasizes: "Schönheit, Anmut und Pracht sind Wahrzeichen der höfischen Gesellschaft. Die höfische Dichtung kennt nur den schönen Menschen . . . ."[4] Although there are notable exceptions to this rule (the most prominent is the figure of Cundrie, who is wise and admirable despite her hideous

appearance), DeBoor correctly observes that from the point of view of the courtly mind, a beautiful exterior was nothing more than the outward expression of a beautiful interior[5] or, to be more precise, an outward sign of the individual's potential to attain ideal, courtly stature. Only the "noble" man could be considered truly beautiful, but this quality of nobility was based on a noble attitude and virtuous conduct rather than on lineage and inheritance alone. As a result, the various virtues, which were so often taken for granted before the courtly era, were re-examined and then defined and redefined with a hitherto unknown precision and clarity.

The new and more clearly defined concept of virtue, which in large measure constituted the essence of the new "höveschеit", was fittingly expressed in Arthurian romance, beginning with the works of Chrétien de Troyes. Chrétien is unequivocally acknowledged to be the founder of the "hohe Artusdichtung"[6] because it was he who transformed the pseudo-historical, unrefined figure of Arthur - a figure known to him through the works of Geoffrey of Monmouth and Wace - into the ideal of knighthood:

> . . . aus dem stolzen Kriegsherrn ist das würdige Oberhaupt der Ritterschaft geworden, der sich mehr durch tadelfreies ritterliches Benehmen und die einem Grandseigneur anstehende Großzügigkeit als durch den längst nicht mehr nötigen Beweis eigener kämpferischer Tapferkeit auszeichnet. Sein Hof ist der Sammelpunkt aller edlen Ritter, und zu seiner Tafelrunde gezählt zu werden, bleibt das höchste Ziel.[7]

As Karl Brogsitter notes, the figure of Arthur seems to come from the distant past; and yet, " . . . das Treiben an seinem Hofe spiegelt nur

die höfische Gesellschaft, die neue ritterliche Lebensordnung und Wertwelt der eigenen Zeit Chretiens."[8]

It would be wrong to overlook the fact that Chrétien's portrayal of Arthur and of the Arthurian court was intended primarily to serve as entertainment for the members of the new courtly society.[9] Despite this fact, however, Chrétien's works also had a clearly didactic purpose. They were meant to provide answers to some of the most basic ethical questions of the time: What is the proper relationship of man to God, and of man to his fellow man? What is the proper role of the ruler, the knight, the lady, the vassal? What constitutes correct courtly behavior? What is the true essence of virtue and nobility? It was to a great extent this didactic concern which made Arthurian romance so attractive and so fitting for the German aristocratic audience of the courtly period, as the following quotation from Thomasin reveals:

> sint die âventiur niht wâr,
> si bezeichent doch vil gar
> waz ein ieglîch man tuon sol
> der nâch vrümkeit wil leben wol.
> dâ von ich den danken wil
> die uns der âventiure vil
> in tiusche zungen hânt verkêrt:
> guot âventiure zuht mêrt. (Thomasin, 113lff.)

It is not known with certainty how the various Arthurian themes were transmitted to Germany.[10] The name of King Arthur first appeared there in Eilhart von Oberg's Tristrant.[11] But the first genuine Arthurian romance was Hartmann's Erec, which became a model for further treatment of Arthurian themes in Germany. German authors of this genre shared the same concern as their French counterparts. They

endeavored to express the highest ideals and noblest aspirations of their times. In Germany as in France, the Arthurian romance attempted to articulate the spirit of courtliness and to translate that spirit into action in the plot. Such an attempt necessarily involved a consideration of the various courtly virtues, among which the virtue of milte figured prominently.

Because milte played a vital role in Arthurian romance, we will now turn our attention to its meaning and role in the four German masterpieces which deal with the "matière de Bretagne": Erec, Iwein, Tristan[12] and Parzival. Our concern is not with the specific place of milte within a "system of courtly virtue" but rather with the way in which the concept of milte was affected by the new and more profound mode of thought in the courtly period. Because Erec marks the starting point of Arthurian romance in Germany, we shall discuss it first and then proceed chronologically to the other major works of this genre.

A. Erec

Although the concept of milte occurs with relative frequency in Hartmann's Erec, it is not the central motif of the work. Hartmann's epic focuses primarily on the conflict between minne and the duties of knighthood, between Erec's love for Enite and his responsibility as a ruler to assure the welfare of his people.[13] As soon as Erec's love for his wife begins to take precedence over his duties as knight and king, the delicate balance between the two poles of his existence is destroyed; it then becomes his task to find a middle path which avoids

the extreme into which he has fallen. Thus the problem of mâze stands at the center of the work.[14] Despite this fact, however, the epic provides us with major insights into the nature of milte.

The concept of milte appears in Erec with the traditional connotations of generosity and mercy or compassion which we encountered in works of precourtly and early courtly literature. Significantly, however, it encompasses a new and broader dimension which we seldom witnessed in earlier works of literature. This new dimension can best be described as "rîcher muot", i.e., as a noble attitude rather than a concrete manifestation of generous behavior. Thomasin defines it in the following way:

> Diu milte ist ein tugente guot
> und hât ir wurze in rîchem muot.
> nu sage waz milte müge sîn?
> si ist des rîchen muotes schîn.
> daz geben heizet milte niht,
> doch wizzet daz ez geschiht
> von der milte, der gerne gît. (Thomasin, 13951ff.)

It is above all this attitude which distinguishes the courtly concept of milte from the earlier concept which we have discussed thus far. Because milte is first and foremost an attitude, even the most impoverished individual who has little or nothing to give can be considered milte in the deepest sense of the word. This fact is clearly demonstrated by the figure of Koralus, the poor but noble and admirable father of Enite. He, more than any other character in the epic, is the epitome of "rîcher muot".

Hartmann's initial description of Koralus calls to mind the medieval conviction that a beautiful or noble exterior is very often

the manifestation of a beautiful interior. Although Koralus lives amid the ruins - "ein altez gemiure"[15] is his abode - he strives to maintain his appearance and to foster conduct befitting a knight. His hair is snow-white from age, but it is groomed in a lordly manner (277ff.). He wears a cloak and hat of sheepskin, by no means regal garb, but the best that is available to him: "diu wâren beidiu alsô guot/ als in sîn state leite." (285f.) These details, as insignificant as they might seem, reveal an important aspect of Koralus' character. His impoverished situation has in no way diminished his noble appearance and bearing, as the concluding lines of the description further indicate:

> er enphlac niht rîcheite.
> sîn gebaerde was vil hêrlîch,
> einem edeln manne gelîch. (287ff.)

From the moment that Erec appears at the humble dwelling and asks for shelter, it becomes vividly apparent that Koralus possesses not only a noble appearance but nobility of spirit as well. Koralus responds to Erec's request with words of genuine hospitality: "'nû sît mir willekomen/ ze dem und ich nû haben mac.'" (305f.) True generosity is also implicit in his response, for he is willing to share whatever he has with his guest, however little that may be. Because Koralus is too poor to employ a servant, he asks his daughter to tend to Erec's horse. When Erec protests, stating that such a task is unsuitable for a woman, Koralus overrides his objections. He wishes to do all that he can to assure the comfort of his guest, even if it entails "ungemach" for himself and his family (342).

Although Hartmann nowhere uses the word milte to describe Koralus, he implicitly conveys the old man's generosity of spirit with the following significant words:

> dar an man mohte schouwen
> daz er rîches muotes wielt,
> daz er den gast sô arm enthielt. (313ff.)

Poverty is quite obviously no deterrent to milte, because milte is synonymous with "rîcher muot". When we consider the literal meaning of this expression, we understand how it came to be used interchangeably with the word milte. One of the principal connotations of "rîch", when used in reference to persons, is "noble", both in the literal and in the figurative sense. The word "muot", in the context in which Hartmann uses it, is best translated as "spirit" or "the capacity to will or want", and by the modern German "Gemüt" or "Gemütszustand". "Rîcher muot", then, is the desire, will or predisposition to act nobly. It does not matter that Koralus has little to offer Erec. His genuine desire to share what he has with Erec even before he learns his guest's identity, his intention to help Erec and to assure his guest's comfort to the fullest extent that he is able - all this is the expression of a noble and generous spirit and thus constitutes the true essence of milte.

That milte is indeed synonymous with "rîcher muot" is shown even more clearly in another passage, which expresses the nature of milte perhaps better than any other lines of medieval German literature. This passage, which describes the way in which Koralus and his family provide for their guest, eloquently accounts for the epithet "edelarmen"

(432) which the author ascribes to them:

hie wart der gast berâten
als si des state hâten.
guote teppeche gespreit
unde dar ûf geleit
alsô rîchiu bettewât
sô si diu werlt beste hât,
mit samîte bezogen,
dem daz golt was unerlogen,
daz daz bette ein man nie möhte erwegen
und selbe vierde müeste legen,
und dar über gebreit
nâch grôzer herren werdekeit
kulter von zendâle,
rîche und gemâle -
diu wâren bi dem viure
des âbendes vil tiure.
si geleisten wol ein reine strô:
dar über genuocte si dô
eines bettes âne vlîz,
daz bedahte ein lîlachen wîz.
ouch was dâ ritters spîse:
swes ein man vil wise
möhte in sînem muote
erdenken ze guote,
des heten si die überkraft
und vollecliche wirtschaft,
doch mans ûf den tisch niht entruoc.
in gap der reine wille genuoc
den man dâ ze hûse vant:
wan er ist aller güete ein phant. (366ff.)

Hartmann begins by informing us that the family cares for their guest according to the means at their disposal. Having previously depicted their poverty, he startles us with the description of splendor which follows. A bed spread out on fine carpets, elegant linen of velvet and gold, a rich and colorfully decorated coverlet of taffeta, in short, accommodations fully suited for a nobleman - such comfort and luxury are non-existent that evening. Instead, Erec must sleep on a bed of clean straw, covered with a plain white sheet. It is clear from the way in which Hartmann has written these lines that he wishes to

stress the contrast between what Erec's hosts would like to have given him and what they were able to actually provide. Such contrast is also seen in the description of the meal which they serve Erec: "ouch was dâ ritters spîse." Food fit for a knight was, in fact, present, and present in excess - if not on the table, then at least in the mind ("muote") and in the good intentions ("guote") of the hosts. Hartmann employs these contrasts in order to show that the intention or desire to do good is vastly more important than possessing the means to do so. Erec does not need rich food and luxurious accommodations; "der reine wille" provides him with all that he requires. It is a "phant", a manifestation of the intrinsic goodness and nobility of the person who displays it; as such, it is to be treasured more than tangible goods. Hartmann's words echo the sentiments of his times. A generation later, Thomasin conveys an amazingly similar message about the nature of milte:

> Hât er niht ze gelîhen guot,
> sô gebe doch sînen rîchen muot.
> swer mir erzeigt willigen muot,
> ich nim ez vür ein grôzez guot. (Thomasin, 14565f.; 14581f.)

Hartmann's message, though somewhat less explicit, is nevertheless unmistakable. The will to be generous is generosity, is nobility of spirit.[16]

That Hartmann conceives of milte as an attitude or predisposition to act nobly and generously is further demonstrated in a number of passages in which he portrays the generosity of spirit of the protagonist. In almost every instance, Hartmann seems to stress the fact that it is the intention even more than the action which constitutes the essence of milte.

After defeating Iders, Erec receives an invitation from the wealthy nobleman Îmâîn to be his guest for the night. Mindful of the kindness and good will which Koralus has shown him, however, Erec declines the invitation to leave his humble lodgings for more comfortable and luxurious quarters. In accordance with the dictates of zuht, he states that he cannot leave his impoverished host, adding that it is his firm intention to make Koralus rich:

'solde ich nû von im wenken,
sô möhte er wol gedenken
er engulte sîner armuot,
des er weizgot niene tuot.
ich sol mit im vil gerne sîn.
mîn staeter wille wirt im schîn:
und suln wir leben halbez jâr,
ich mache in rîche, daz ist wâr,
mir engebreste des guotes.
mir enzerinnet niht des muotes,
ich enbringe in ûf die vart,
daz er nie rîcher wart.' (1352ff.)

Upon taking leave of Koralus some time later, Erec reaffirms the commitment which he has made:

Erec sagete dem alten,
swenne im sîn bote kaeme,
swaz er von dem vernaeme,
daz er dar nâch taete:
wan er den willen haete
ze tuone sîner armuot buoz. (1469ff.)

Significant is the appearance of the word "wille" in both passages. Although Erec is not yet able to help Koralus[17], he firmly intends to do so; and it is precisely the intention, the "wille" or "muot", which is synonymous with milte. Even if Erec were unable to alleviate the poverty of Koralus, by courtly standards he would still be considered milte solely on the basis of his desire to do so. Of course, at the

earliest opportunity Erec fulfills his pledge by sending Koralus gold, silver, clothing and an invitation to journey to his father's kingdom, where two houses will be given to him (1806ff.). As important as the keeping of the promise, however, is the promise itself, because Erec's desire to be generous is of itself a manifestation of "rîcher muot".

Hartmann's characterization of Erec at the beginning of the three day tournament which marks the end of the wedding celebration provides us with further evidence of Erec's generosity of spirit. Erec has never before participated in a tournament; consequently, he very much desires to demonstrate his "werde" (2255) or honor in a proper way. He fears that improper conduct at the tournament might earn him the scorn and criticism of those present, and he is especially preoccupied because of his poverty:

> dô enwas er niht sô rîche
> daz er vollecliche
> mohte mit dem guote
> volziehen sînem muote. (2262ff.)

A man of his high standing is obliged by the rules of courtly etiquette to display generosity on such an occasion. Although Erec clearly wishes to do so, as the above passage indicates, he lacks the necessary means. Arthur comes to his rescue, however. Prompted by milte (2273), he gives Erec what is required to fulfill the obligations of generosity and to demonstrate his honor. Erec's generosity would have been even greater, had he had his own wealth at his disposal:

> er haete wunder getân,
> möhte er gehabet hân
> nâch sînem willen volle hant.
> als ez im nû was gewant,
> dar nâch sazte er sînen muot. (2276ff.)

Once again Hartmann employs the words "wille" and "muot" to underscore Erec's desire to be generous, which of itself constitutes generosity. Lacking the means to fully carry out his desire, Erec does as much as he can to that end with the means available to him.

Erec wins the prize at the tournament, thereby proving himself to be an outstanding representative of knighthood. In order to convey the full extent of Erec's excellence, Hartmann first compares him to Gawan, the epitome of knightly perfection:

> vil ritterlîchen stuont sîn muot:
> an im enschein niht wan guot,
> rîch und edel was er genuoc,
> sîn herze niemen nît entruoc.
> er was getriuwe
> und milte âne riuwe,
> staete unde wol gezogen,
> sîniu wort unbetrogen,
> starc schoene und manhaft.
> an im was aller tugende kraft. (2730ff.)

The formulation "milte âne riuwe" is significant. Although we might assume that "riuwe" is employed for the sake of rhyme, it is more probable that Hartmann uses the word in order to allude to an idea which gained wide acceptance during the courtly period: To give sorrowfully or to regret having been generous is antithetical to milte, because it is the attitude with which a gift is given rather than the gift itself that defines generosity.[18] According to Hartmann's description, then, Gawan is milte in the true sense of the word.

Having portrayed Gawan in highly favorable terms, Hartmann goes on to state that no other knight except Erec can be compared to him (2749ff.). Hartmann then describes Erec with the highest accolades available to a writer of his times:

Êrec der tugenthafte man
wart zę vollem lobe gesaget.
den prîs hete er dâ bejaget,
und den sô volleclichen
daz man begunde gelîchen
sîn wîsheit Salomône,
sîn schoene Absolône,
an sterke Samsônes genôz,
sin milte dûhte si sô grôz,
diu gemâzete in niemen ander
wan dem milten Alexander. (2811ff.)

The significance of this passage is aptly explained by Armin Meng. Tournaments such as the one in which Erec is the victor are more than contests held solely for the sake of demonstrating the physical strength and fighting skills of the participants. They are, instead,

> . . . Auseinandersetzungen von sinnbildlichem Charakter . . . , in denen die Gegner in einem ganz bestimmten inneren Verhältnis zueinander stehen und Sieg oder Niederlage mehr aufzeigen, als ein rein äußerliches Kraftverhältnis. Erec hat sich im Turnier den besten Rittern ebenbürtig, wenn nicht gar überlegen erwiesen - aber eben nicht nur in rein körperlicher Hinsicht: seine sterke ist ein Hinweis auf seine wisheit und milte, und diese Tugenden finden ihren Ausdruck in seiner schoene, die im Mittelalter meist das Sichtbarwerden menschlicher Vollkommenheit bedeutet.[19]

By means of superlative description, then, Hartmann demonstrates that Erec is an individual of exemplary courtly stature[20] to which the virtue of milte substantially contributes.

Erec's generosity is apparent not only at the height of his good fortune but also in times of duress. During the series of aventiure which befall him after he is awakened from his life of "gemache" with Enite, Erec twice displays great generosity in return for services rendered to him. In the first instance, a young servant of Galoein

who sees that Erec and Enite have endured hardships is moved by their plight and offers them his services, along with bread and wine to alleviate their discomfort. Erec responds to the youth's kindness with the following words:

> 'knabe, ir sult von rehte
> etelîchen lôn emphân
> des ir zuo uns habet getân.
> ir habet minne wol versolt.
> nû enhân ich silber noch golt
> dâ ich ius gelône mite:
> geselle, nû tuot des ich iuch bite
> und nemet die wal
> under der rosse zal,
> ein daz iuz liebiste sî.
> unde sît gewis dâ bî,
> kumt uns immer der tac
> daz ich iuch baz gehandeln mac,
> des gebristet iu niht an mir . . . .' (3559ff.)

The words "von rehte" indicate Erec's awareness that, according to the dictates of justice, he owes the youth some payment for his services. Erec's gesture goes beyond the bounds of mere justice, however. By allowing the boy to choose the best of the horses, Erec gives "nâch rehte", i.e., according to the laws of milte.[21] His gift is an expression of the "minne" which the boy, by his kindness, has inspired in Erec. As in his dealings with Koralus, Erec is unable, because of his circumstances, to fully carry out his good intentions at once. If he had silver or gold with him, he would surely offer the youth an even richer reward. Since that is not possible, however, he gives the very best of what he has to offer, along with his sincere assurance of future reward. Here, once again, Hartmann stresses the nobility of Erec's intentions. He informs us that Erec would have given the youth all eight horses, had he not needed them himself (3576ff.). Not only the concrete

reward which Erec bestows on the boy but also his genuine willingness to give even more than what is required in the "Dienst-Lohn" situation is the expression of true milte.

In the second instance, when Erec discovers that he must flee his lodgings in order to escape the treachery of Galoein, he summons the innkeeper and gives him more than ample reward for his services:

> 'in iuwerm hûs habet ir uns hie
> gehandelt schône unde wol:
> des geltes bin ich iuwer schol.
> nû vernemet waz irs erholt.
> ich enhân hie silber noch golt
> dâ ich iu vergelte mite.
> nû tuot als ich iuch bite:
> diu siben ros nemet ir
> nû ze gelte von mir.' (4007ff.)

As in the previous instance, after expressing sincere regret at having neither gold nor silver to offer, Erec gives the most generous payment possible under the circumstances. It could, of course, be argued that Erec's generosity is prompted by a desire to facilitate his flight; without the encumbrance of seven extra horses, he and Enite could more rapidly ride away from the danger which awaits them. But the similarity of expression in this passage and in the previous one suggests that Erec is motivated by a genuine desire to be generous rather than by tactical considerations.

The connotation of milte as generosity is evident not only in Erec's attitude and behavior but within the context of the "hochzît" as well. Hartmann's description of Erec's wedding celebration stresses both the generosity displayed there and the result of that generosity. The description begins as follows:

dô huop sich dâ ein hôchzît
daz man ir vollen lop gît.
dâ enerschein dehein armuot. (2126ff.)

Just as we saw in our discussion of the festivities in Veldeke's Eneide, here, too, the absence of poverty seems to be a prerequisite of the "hochzît", which is primarily intended to promote the happiness of all participants. The guests could not fully share in the joy of the occasion if they were burdened by the hardships which poverty entails; hence the host, along with the other nobility present, alleviates the cares of the poor by sharing with them. The result is the praise of the festivities, which reflects favorably upon the honor of those who have been generous. Further evidence of this fact is found in Hartmann's commentary on the "Spielleute" who attend the celebration. Referring to these traveling entertainers as the "diete . . . diu guot umbe êre nam" (2166f.), Hartmann notes that their principal character defect is the tendency to become envious and to curse the festivities if one of them receives more than the others. This, he assures us, is not the case at Erec's wedding, where all become equally rich (2169ff.). As a result, they are joyous when they leave, and they express their joy by speaking well of the celebration, which, in turn, brings honor to their benefactors.

In addition to connoting generosity, milte also occurs implicitly in the context of mercy and compassion throughout the epic. Milte as erbärmde is most clearly seen in the conduct of Erec, who is as compassionate as he is generous. Perhaps the earliest direct evidence of Erec's capacity for mercy is found in the Iders incident.[22] Erec is

still a young and inexperienced knight with no previous exposure to aventiure when he receives the fateful lash from the whip of Iders' servant.[23] The unjust, uncourtly attack to which Erec is subjected is an affront not only to his own honor but also to that of the entire Arthurian court, of which he is a member. Erec sets out in pursuit of Iders in order to right the wrong which has been perpetrated. The significance of this, his first aventiure, is expressed well by Meng:

> . . . sie ist Erecs Chance, die Stufe vom Jüngling zum Ritter zu überwinden; sie ist die entscheidende Prüfung, die der Aufnahme an der Tafelrunde, der Welt der Erwachsenen, vorausgeht.[24]

The confrontation which ensues provides the first decisive test of Erec's knightly prowess and, as we shall see, the first crucial test of his character as well.

Erec's confrontation with Iders takes place at the "Sperber" contest where, for the third year in a row, Iders sets out to demonstrate that his lady is the most beautiful in the realm by claiming the coveted prize. When Erec challenges his right to do so, stating that "ritterschaft" will decide the winner (707), Iders responds by unequivocally asserting that he will not spare Erec's life, should he be victorious:

> 'ir enerbarmet mir niht:
> als ich iu nû gesige an,
> des ich nie zwîvel gewan,
> alsô stât hin ziu mîn muot
> daz ich danne dehein guot
> naeme vür iuwern lîp.' (715ff.)

Iders' words, in addition to being arrogant, also reveal a basic lack of compassion in his character. His übermuot is brought low, however, when Erec defeats him in combat. The man who had promised to show Erec no

mercy then begs for precisely what he would have refused to grant, had he been the victor: "'durch got erbarme dich,/ edel ritter, über mich.'" (956f.)

Erec would, of course, be completely justified in taking Iders' life, since theirs was a life-or-death confrontation. Furthermore, Iders had done nothing to prevent the dishonor which befell Erec at the hands of his servant, and he had also insulted Enite at the contest by addressing her as "ir dürftiginne" (694). Such conduct could easily unleash uncontrollable feelings of revenge in a man as young as Erec. However, he acts mercifully by sparing the life of his defeated opponent:

> Erec erbarmde sich dô.
> zuo dem ritter sprach er sô:
> 'nû wil ich iuch leben lân:
> des enhetet ir mir niht getân.' (1010ff.)

Having proven that he is the superior fighter, Erec also demonstrates that he is the nobler human being. In addition, he cures Iders of his blinding arrogance.[25] Erec has spared a man who has the potential to become an exemplary knight. Having learned humility, Iders will ultimately prove himself worthy of membership in the Round Table.

During the series of aventiure which later befalls him after his departure from Karnant, Erec meets with further opportunity to demonstrate his mercy and compassion. Riding towards Karadigan, Erec chances upon a lady who is clearly in a state of utter despair. When he hears her cries for help and beholds her grief-stricken state, he is moved to pity. Close to tears (5337), he asks her the cause of her distress and learns that two giants have dragged off her beloved. The significance of his decision to help her becomes clear when we consider that

in each of his previous aventiure - the encounter with three, then five robbers, the Galoein incident and the conflict with Guivreiz - Erec had acted in self-defense. Now, however, he is presented with the opportunity to risk his life on behalf of someone else:

> Zum ersten Mal ist nicht sein Leben, sondern das eines Unbekannten in Gefahr. Niemand zwingt ihn zum Kampf mit dem Unholden, bei dem weder materielle Vorteile noch viel Ehre zu erringen sind. Aber nach den ersten vier Abenteuern ist er fähig geworden zur altruistischen Tat. Er denkt keinen Augenblick an sich selber, sondern setzt sich, ohne zu zögern, für den Hilfebedürftigen ein.[26]

By rescuing the captured knight at the cost of great physical exertion and extreme peril to himself, Erec makes partial restitution for the life of excessive leisure which he had led in Karnant. There Erec had turned his back on society and neglected his knightly calling; here, in contrast, Erec " . . . nimmt in arebeit tätig Teil an der Welt, in jenem vorbildlichen Sinne des Ritteramtes, der den Schutz der Armen und Schwachen erheischt."[27]

Erec's capacity for mercy is also revealed in his confrontation with Mabonagrin, which parallels the Iders incident in a number of ways. Upon their initial encounter, Mabonagrin speaks rudely to Erec, "gelîch einem übelen man." (9026) Like Iders, Mabonagrin is totally confident of his ability to defeat Erec. When Erec announces his intention to challenge him, Mabonagrin responds with arrogant contempt: "'wes ist dir, tumber gouch, gedâht?'" (9044) The heads of eighty former challengers, grotesquely impaled on stakes, serve as grim testimony that Mabonagrin will surely take Erec's life, should he be victorious.

Despite this fact, however, Erec spares his opponent after defeating him: "Êrec erbarmte sich,/ alsô daz er in leben lie." (9385f.) He is able to recognize the intrinsic worth and dignity of his opponent as well as the deeper significance of his victory: "Für ihn [Erec] bedeutet der Sieg 'die Überwindung des Karnanter Lebensstils für alle Zeiten', für Mabonagrin die Erlösung, für Brandigan die Wiederkehr der vreude."[28]

Having released Mabonagrin from the prison of isolation from society, Erec has one final mission of mercy to accomplish. Because of the plight of the eighty widows whose husbands were slain by Mabonagrin, Erec cannot fully participate in the joy of the occasion:

> doch was er âne vreude hie,
> alsô daz er sin herze nie
> von swaerem kumber brâhte.
> swenne er dar an gedâhte,
> so entweich im aller sîn muot,
> als ez dem erbarmherzen tuot:
> dem ervollent dicke diu ougen
> offenlîch und tougen,
> swenne er iht des gesiht
> daz wol zerbarmenne geschiht. (9782ff.)

He witnesses that "trûren unde klagen" (9805) is the fate of the widows, and in his compassion for them, he participates in their mourning: "nû half in Êrec trûric sîn." (9816) Not content with a merely passive empathy, however, Erec translates his feelings of sorrow into action by taking the women to Arthur's court, where their misery will be alleviated and where they will contribute to the joy of the realm. In his excellent analysis of this episode, Wapnewski observes that Erec's rescue of the widows goes to the very core of knightly ethics:

> Die biblische Forderung nach dem Schutz der Armen, Kranken, Witwen und Waisen hat geradezu

> eine den Ritterstand begründende Funktion gehabt. Dreifach die Erlösung: Erek kann die beiden Liebenden, kann die 80 Frauen erlösen, weil er sich erlöst hat.[29]

The widows' change of clothing from black to bright colors symbolizes the transformation of mourning into joy: "vreude die nur gedeiht auf dem Boden der erbermde; eines christlichen Erbarmens, das nicht in der Klage besteht, sondern in der ritterlich helfenden Tat."[30]

Our discussion of Erec up to this point has revealed that milte occurs in the epic with two of its three familiar connotations: generosity (with the accent on attitude and predisposition rather than on action) and mercy or compassion. The third traditional connotation, milte as an attitude of love, care and concern which a ruler should display for his subjects, would appear to be absent from the work. Significantly, however, its absence is intricately related to the basic theme of the epic. Erec's failure to foster the virtue of mâze inevitably results in the neglect of milte as well. Because Erec dedicates himself exclusively to his relationship with Enite, he soon grows oblivious of his duties as a knight and as king of the realm.

Hartmann's depiction of Erec's deterioration as knight and king begins gradually and then builds to a dramatic climax. First of all, Erec is content to allow his companions to participate in tournaments; he himself remains at home with Enite, avoiding those occasions which once brought honor to him and joy to all who participated. Then his love for Enite so totally absorbs him that his honor is completely dissipated:

die minnete er sô sêre
daz er aller êre
durch sie einen verphlac . . . . (2968ff.)

Soon everyone ignores him. His people, "die vor der vreude phlâgen" (2977), grow unhappy. The entire world speaks ill of him. Finally, the ultimate reproach is made to a king whose duty it is to provide for the happiness and well-being of his people and who has miserably failed to do so: "sîn hof wart aller vreuden bar/ unde stuont nâch schanden." (2989f.)

Because of his immoderate love for Enite, Erec fails to foster one important aspect of the virtue of milte. Although he is at all times generous and compassionate, he ceases for a time to exhibit the care and concern which he, as a ruler, owes to his people. When Enite makes him aware of this failure, he promptly sets out to correct it. In a very real sense, then, the series of aventiure which follows constitutes restitution not only for his failure to love within the bounds of mâze but also for his failure to foster the virtue of milte.

In conclusion, it must be noted that Hartmann's conception of milte as the desire, will or predisposition to act nobly and generously marks the beginning of a new orientation in thought which gradually becomes predominant during the courtly period. While externals are still important, a shift of emphasis from outer to inner values takes place. It is still essential that the aristocracy display generosity at a "hochzît", for example, or that Erec distribute goods at a tournament, because failure to do so would result in the loss of honor - honor in the sense of outer recognition and praise from others. But it is even more

essential that the individual possess inner honor and nobility of spirit. The epithet "edelarmen" which describes Koralus and his family reveals that honor and nobility in the deeper sense depend not on the possession and distribution of wealth but on the genuine desire to share what one has, however much or little that may be. The repeated occurrence of the words "wille" and "muot" in those passages which involve the virtue of milte signals a growing concern with being rather than only with doing, with essence rather than with outward display.

The concept of milte which we encountered in Erec is not to be regarded as the unique creation of Hartmann's poetic imagination nor as the expression of his philosophy alone. It is instead a manifestation of the new spirit of "curtoisie" which led the authors of the courtly period to reconsider the meaning of the key concepts of their times. We noted above that Hartmann's pronouncements on the nature of milte showed a high degree of correspondence to those of at least one other author of the period, namely Thomasin. In our discussion of the works of other courtly authors it will become increasingly apparent that Hartmann was one of many writers to share the new definition of milte. Before turning to those authors, however, we will first consider the concept of milte as it appears in Hartmann's other major epic, Iwein.

B. Iwein

We chose to begin this chapter with a discussion of Hartmann's Erec, which is believed to be one of the earliest works of the author,[31] primarily because it provided us with insight into Hartmann's concept of

the nature of milte as "rîcher muot". Iwein, which is considered to be Hartmann's final masterpiece, merits discussion for a number of equally significant reasons. In the first place, the concept of milte occurs in Iwein in an even broader variety of contexts than in Erec. In one passage the word is used in a seemingly unconscious way, without reflection on its deeper meaning; in others it is intricately related to the didactic message of the author. Secondly, the concept of milte as "rîcher muot" which we encountered in Erec is further illustrated in Iwein. Thirdly, in a key passage of the epic, Hartmann unmasks a false and superficial understanding of milte and of êre which for a time prevails in the Arthurian realm. It is clear that if we are aware of what is not to be regarded as milte and êre, we become better able to perceive the true meaning of these concepts. Finally, the connotation of milte as erbärmde is the central theme of the work. We will consider each of these four points in detail.

In our discussion of various works of precourtly and early courtly literature, we observed that the word milte was often used solely for the sake of providing a convenient rhyme. Hartmann, who has a very sophisticated understanding of the nature of milte, uses the word in this antiquated manner on only one occasion. In the scene which describes the battle between Iwein and Gawan, we read: "sî wâren der schilte/ ein ander harte milte."[32] In the only other instance in which milte rhymes with "schilte", the word is used in a much more conscious and deliberate way. Laudine describes her husband Ascalôn with the following words:

sî sprach 'geselle, an dir ist tôt
der aller tiureste man,
der rîters namen ie gewan,
van manheit und von milte.
ezn gereit nie mit schilte
dehein rîter alsô volkomen.' (1454ff.)

The virtue of milte appears here as one of the principal qualities which makes a knight worthy of the epithet "volkomen". The fact that Hartmann uses milte as a convenient rhyme word only once in Iwein (and never in Erec) points to a trend in the literature of the period: As courtly authors begin to give greater thought to the meaning of milte, the word is used less and less frequently in an unconscious manner or solely for the sake of rhyme.

Hartmann's conception of milte as "rîcher muot", as the predisposition or willingness to act nobly, is revealed in a number of passages in Iwein. Perhaps the most outstanding example is found in the attitude and conduct of Gawan's sister and her husband. Iwein enters their home in search of shelter shortly after two of the couple's sons have been put to death by the giant Harpîn. Although the same tragic fate awaits their four remaining sons, the couple attempts to put aside their grief in order to make their guest feel welcome. Their nobility of spirit is stressed from the moment that Iwein first meets them:

dô nam er ir beider war,
ir gebaerde unde ir muotes:
done vander niht wan guotes. (4386ff.)

Although an atmosphere of sorrow engulfs the entire household, the couple and all their servants feign happiness for Iwein's sake. In the interest of hospitality, they strive to transcend their own problems so that they can concentrate fully on the needs of their guest:

der wille was dâ ungespart
von manne und von wîbe,
er wart sînem lîbe
ze dienste gekêret
und über state gêret.
sî wurden vil vaste
ze liebe dem gaste
alle wider ir willen vrô:
wan ir herze meindez niender sô. (4398ff.)

In this passage, as in similar passages in Erec, Hartmann stresses the will to do what is appropriate and right. The extraordinary effort of Iwein's hosts not to burden him with their sorrow but rather to do all that they can to assure his well-being appears all the more admirable when we consider the selflessness which it represents. The couple extends their hospitality to Iwein before he promises to challenge Harpin and to rescue their sons.[33]

Hartmann tends to use the guest-host relationship to stress his conviction that milte is above all an attitude. The unnamed host who ministers to Iwein's wounds after the hero's rescue of Lunete also displays disinterested generosity:

der selbe engegen ime gienc
und in vroelîch enphienc
und schuof im selhen gemach
daz er wol an den werken sach
daz sîn wille und sîn muot
was reine unde guot. (5599ff.)

It is not the man's action ("werke") but his intention ("wille", "muot") which constitutes true generosity. His deeds are external manifestations of an inner quality, of the goodness and purity of heart which is synonymous with milte. Implicit in Hartmann's words is a perception of the nature of milte which is shared by other authors of the period. Thomasin, for example, also stresses the fact that giving is not milte:

daz geben heizet milte niht,
doch wizzet daz ez geschiht
von der milte, der gerne gît. (Thomasin, 13955ff.)

He, like Hartmann, regards what is given as an external expression of an inner attitude, as the word "bezeichent" in the following quotation indicates: "die gâbe . . . bezeichent milte und vrümkeit." (Thomasin, 13961f.) Hartmann further reveals his perception of milte as the attitude of "rîcher muot" in the following passages: 367f.; 2899-2912; 5513-5520; 5575-5598.

In addition to providing us with insight into the nature of milte, Hartmann also uncovers a false and shallow understanding of this virtue and of the concept of êre. It might at first seem surprising that a superficial concept of any of the courtly virtues could exist in the Arthurian realm, which is traditionally portrayed as "Ort der vreude und Harmonie, als Zentrum höfischen Menschentums"[34]; and yet, this is precisely the case in Iwein. Even such an ideal realm is subject to imperfections, as Meng observes: "Die ideale Ordnung, die hier herrscht, ist allerdings nicht unbestritten und bedarf dauernd einer Wiederbestätigung."[35]

From the beginning of the work we are confronted with indications that something is amiss in the Arthurian world. Kâlogrenant's definition of aventiure is the earliest example of a shallow comprehension of the meaning of knightly activity:

'nû sich wie ich gewâfent bin:
ich heize ein riter und hân den sin
daz ich suochende rîte
einen man der mit mir strîte,
der gewâfent sî als ich.
daz prîset in, und sleht er mich:

> gesige aber ich im an,
> sô hât man mich vür einen man,
> und wirde werder danne ich sî.' (529ff.)

His words reveal that for him, êre was at one time synonymous with mere physical prowess; only later, after being unseated by a formidable opponent, does he gain a true perception of the meaning of knightly honor, as we shall see more clearly later. Further evidence of a deteriorating state of affairs is seen in the fact that the Arthurian court is no longer able to render help to those in need, thus failing to fulfill one of the primary functions on which its honor is based:

> Lunete, der Burgherr und die jüngere Tochter des Grafen vom Schwarzen dorne werden abgewiesen, und nur wenn der Hof selbst bedroht ist, erfolgt ein Einsatz, so nach der Niederlage Kalogreants und der Entführung Ginoveres. Gawein ist nie vorhanden, wenn man ihn brauchen würde, und die andern Ritter sind offensichtlich unfähig, ihn zu vertreten. Die Überlistung des Hofes durch Meljaganz zeigt schließlich seine Schwäche unverhüllt.[36]

When Meljaganz appears at the Arthurian court, he promptly reminds Arthur of the latter's reputation for unfaltering milte and vrümekeit (4539). He requests a gift from the king, only to be sent away empty-handed. Angered by Arthur's refusal to grant his request, Meljaganz calls into question the honor of the king:

> 'man saget von sîner miltekeit,
> ezn wurde rîter nie verseit
> swez er in ie gebaete.
> sîn êre sîn unstaete
> dem er wol gevalle.' (4561ff.)

This reproach to Arthur's honor distresses his counselors, who urge him to give Meljaganz whatever he requests, lest the angry knight depart to spread the news of Arthur's dishonorable conduct (4569ff.).

Arthur reconsiders and promises to grant the knight's petition, only to learn that Meljaganz desires nothing less than the queen herself. Arthur's dilemma parallels that of St. Oswald, who was also asked to relinquish his wife to a guest in his kingdom. But in contrast to Oswald, whose willingness to display generosity was the ultimate proof that he possessed inner honor, Arthur's acquiescence to a promise extracted from him by trickery and deceit serves to illustrate that he does not understand the real meaning of milte and êre. The loss of Guinevere, far from increasing Arthur's honor and demonstrating his generosity, brings shame to the court. The fact that every knight who sets out to recover the queen is summarily defeated by Meljaganz is symptomatic of the state of inefficacy into which the court has lapsed. Later, of course, Gawan succeeds in defeating the cunning Meljaganz and returning the queen to her husband. But the ease with which Meljaganz had taken her away is indicative of a shallow understanding of precisely those virtues which the Arthurian court is meant to represent in the purest and most exemplary way.

Iwein himself is not unscathed by the less than ideal state of affairs which prevails in the realm. He, too, shares the superficial concept of milte and êre which has infested the court. It is this problem which lies at the very core of the epic, although literary scholarship is sharply divided in its opinion on this issue. The two major conflicting viewpoints are best represented by Wapnewski and Thomas Cramer on the one hand, and by Kurt Ruh on the other. Wapnewski maintains that Iwein's guilt consists of lack of triuwe and erbärmde in

his treatment of Ascalôn:

> Iwein hat sich des elementarsten Verstoßes gegen die triuwe und erbermde, gegen das Recht auf Schutz und Schonung schuldig gemacht. Er hat den König Askalon erschlagen. Der rechtmäßige Herr der Quelle, mutwillig provoziert durch den Gewitterzauber, rechtens zur Verteidigung seines Eigentums antretend, mit Grund empört über den angerichteten Flurschaden - er wird von Iwein gegen alle Regeln ritterlichen Kampfes erschlagen.[37]

Proof of this contention, he asserts, is most clearly seen in the composition of the epic. Iwein's aventiuren in the second part of the work stand in direct relationship to the guilt which he incurred by slaying Ascalôn; they are, without exception, "Handlungen der erbermde, des Rechts, der absoluten Selbstlosigkeit."[38] Cramer, who supports Wapnewski's arguments,[39] carries them one step further: "Iweins Schuld bestand darin, daß er sich durch Verletzung eines Rechtszustandes gewaltsam in den Besitz einer Frau und eines Landes gesetzt hat."[40]

In direct contrast to these opinions, Ruh considers Iwein's failure to return to Laudine by the appointed deadline as the actual guilt of the protagonist. He, like Wapnewski, speaks of Iwein's lack of triuwe; but he believes that the hero is untrue to Laudine, who, as "Herrin der Quelle und Herrin über ihren Gemahl", represents "Minne als ungeteilte Forderung, in ihrer Allgewalt."[41] The following statement perhaps best summarizes Ruh's position:

> Aber die Tatsache, daß er [Iwein] den Termin durch tourniersportliche Betätigung verpassen konnte, heißt immerhin, daß diese Minne zu wenig gefestigt, daß Iwein sich des hohen Wertes dieser Minne, wie auch seiner Aufgabe als Quellenritter zu wenig bewußt war.[42]

Ruh supports his conviction by stating that each of the aventiuren in

the second part of the epic is a test of Iwein's triuwe[43] and not, as Wapnewski maintains, of the hero's capacity for erbärmde. In light of these conflicting interpretations of the major issue of the epic, we must turn to the text itself. Examination of key passages will, we believe, reveal that Wapnewski and Cramer better understand the message which Hartmann wishes to convey.

Iwein first learns of the existence of Ascalôn's kingdom when Kâlogrenant tells the story of the fate which befell him there. He prefaces his tale with a warning to listen to the story with the heart, i.e., to see beyond the surface and to perceive its deeper significance:

> 'maneger biutet diu ôren dar:
> ern nemes ouch mit dem herzen war,
> sone wirt im niht wan der dôz,
> und ist der schade alze grôz . . . . '(251ff.)

These words are meant to alert his audience to the lesson which he has learned from his experience. His intrusion into Ascalôn's kingdom and the pouring of water onto the stone was a breach of justice, as the words of the rightfully angry lord reveal[44]:

> 'rîter, ir sît triuwelôs.
> mirn wart von iu niht widerseit,
> und habent mir lasterlîchez leit
> in iuwer hôchvart getân.
> nu wie sihe ich minen walt stân!
> den habent ir mir verderbet
> und mîn wilt ersterbet
> und mîn gevügele verjaget.' (712ff.)

Kâlogrenant's actions resulted not in the attainment of the honor which he had sought but in well-deserved disgrace: "'der prîs was sîn, und mîn diu schame.'" (756) Ascalôn defeated him; moreover, he simply left his unseated opponent lying on the ground without even granting him the

honor of a glance (747ff.).

Iwein's reaction to the tale is significant. Despite Kâlogrenant's acknowledgement of the inherent injustice of his action, Iwein promptly decides that he, too, will challenge the lord of the "Brunnen": "Obwohl Iwein also wissen müßte, daß er sich mit seinem Ausritt des gleichen Rechtsbruches schuldig machen wird, unterläßt er ihn nicht."[45] It is apparent that he has not heard the story with his heart, because he declares that he wishes to avenge the disgrace which has befallen his relative Kâlogrenant (805ff.). The fact that Iwein perceives Kâlogrenant's fate as a dishonor points to his shallow concept of êre - a concept that is shared by Arthur himself, who, upon hearing the tale repeated in its entirety, announces that he will go to the "Brunnen" to challenge its lord.

Iwein is dismayed by Arthur's intention because it will rob him of the opportunity to demonstrate his knightly honor:

> er gedâhte 'ich enmac daz niht bewarn,
> und wil der künec selbe varn,
> mirn werde mîn rîterschaft benomen.
> mir sol des strîtes vür komen
> mîn her Gâwein . . . .' (911ff.)

As Cramer correctly observes, Iwein's undertaking is "ein Akt der superbia, denn er erfolgt nur aus der Besorgnis, Gawein könne den zu erwartenden Ruhm für sich einheimsen."[46] The thirst for honor becomes an obsession after Iwein succeeds in mortally wounding the lord whom he has unjustly provoked. Hartmann's words "her Îwein jaget in âne zuht" (1056) - contrary to the laws of knighthood and justice - are a clear indication of Iwein's guilt. Iwein fears that if his opponent

escapes, he will be unable to prove his deed to the Arthurian court, thus losing the honor which he had sought:

> do gedâht her Îwein, ob er in
> niht erslüege od vienge,
> daz ez im danne ergienge
> als im her Keiî gehiez,
> der niemens ungespottet liez:
> und waz im sîn arbeit töhte,
> sô er mit niemen ermöhte
> erziugen dise geschiht
> (wan dâne was der liute niht):
> sô spraecher im an sîn êre. (1062ff.)

Wapnewski's comment on this passage is most fitting: "Das ist praktisch gedacht; aber ritterlich und rechtlich ist es nicht."[47] To emphasize Iwein's obsession with this false concept of honor, Hartmann repeatedly reminds us of the hero's desire to capture Ascalôn in order to provide evidence of his successful undertaking. Virtually imprisoned between two trap doors and in mortal peril, Iwein thinks only of seizing his trophy:

> swie sêre im missegangen
> an der vancnüsse waere,
> doch was sîn meistiu swaere
> daz er im vor dan
> alsô lebendec entran. (1130ff.)

Similar passages are found in lines 1519-1533 and 1726-1730.

It is clear that to hunt down one's mortally wounded opponent for the sake of honor - an opponent who has been unjustly attacked and who flees not out of cowardice but because of a desire to die at home in dignity - violates every law of mercy and compassion. It is also clear that Iwein's subsequent marriage to Laudine and his inheritance of Ascalôn's kingdom are based on a breach of justice and inhumane conduct. Thus it is not surprising that Iwein's aventiuren in the second half of

the work are without exception "Befreiungshandlungen, Erlösungsakte".[48] Nor is it merely coincidental that in each instance - in direct contrast to his unjust treatment of Ascalôn - Iwein intervenes on the side of justice to help the wrongfully oppressed.

Until Iwein comes to her aid, the Dame von Nârisôn is the helpless victim of Count Âliers, who has beseiged her kingdom and devastated her land. Iwein's decision to rescue the lion from the dragon represents his alignment with the forces of good and his opposition to evil.[49] By challenging Harpîn, Iwein liberates the four remaining sons of a couple whose misery is brought about by the giant's lust for their daughter. Lunete, falsely accused of treachery by the envious servants of her mistress; the 300 hostages imprisoned in the Burg zum Schlimmen Abenteuer as payment for their king's defeat; the younger Gräfin vom Schwarzen Dorn, whose sister attempts to deprive her of her rightful inheritance - all these oppressed and helpless individuals are rescued by Iwein. Moreover, none of Iwein's deeds of mercy brings him the external honor which he had once sought, because each is performed anonymously; Iwein is known only as the "Knight with the Lion" until his last aventiure. Thus we see a shift of emphasis from external to inner honor in the epic: Iwein's pursuit of fame and recognition led him to act without mercy in his encounter with Ascalôn. His merciful intervention on behalf of the unjustly maligned brings him no outer recognition; more importantly, however, it proves that he possesses inner honor.

Although we cannot overlook the fact that Iwein does indeed incur guilt by neglecting to return to Laudine by the appointed deadline, this failure is by no means as grave as the lack of justice and compassion for which he makes restitution throughout the latter part of the work. Only two of Iwein's aventiuren serve as "Straf- und Lehrlektionen"[50] for his failure to be punctual. In the first instance, Harpîn appears at the scene of confrontation so late that Iwein must greatly exert himself afterwards in order to arrive in time to save Lunete from death. In the second, Iwein reaches the Arthurian court at the last minute to intervene on behalf of the young heiress; in this case, too, a previous undertaking delays him, thus forcing him to make a great effort to arrive in time to keep his promise of help. If it were the case, as Ruh contends, that Iwein's failure to keep his promise to Laudine is symptomatic of his lack of appreciation of her love, then it is highly probable that more than only two incidents would serve as tests of his punctuality and as punishment for his failure to keep his promise.

The text provides even more convincing evidence that Iwein's main failure is not to be found in his relationship with Laudine, as Wapnewski's excellent analysis reveals. Wapnewski contrasts Iwein's fate to that of Hartmann's other major heroes: Erec, Gregorius and Heinrich. All three are struck down at precisely the height of their fame:

> Stürzt sie alle drei, weil sie nicht ihrem ordo, ihrem Gesetz gemäß leben, nicht gemäß der von Gott in sie gelegten Bestimmung, weil sich innerer und äußerer Status nicht decken, weil sie das Ererbte nicht erworben haben und in selbstgenügsamer Scheinsicherheit dahinleben.[51]

In light of this information, it would seem logical to assume that Iwein's case might be similar. However, while Hartmann does not spare his criticism of the other three heroes, neither he (in the form of digression) nor anyone at the court says anything about Iwein that could be construed as blame at the moment when Iwein is cursed by Lunete. On the contrary, Hartmann characterizes the hero as the epitome of knightly perfection:

> er was ein degen bewaeret
> und ein helt unervaeret:
> swie manhaft er doch waere
> und swie unwandelbaere
> an lîbe unde an sinne,
> doch meistert vrou Minne
> daz im ein krankez wîp
> verkêrte sinne unde lîp.
> der ie ein rehter adamas
> rîterlîcher tugende was,
> der lief nû harte balde
> ein tôre in dem walde. (3249ff.)

Vrou Minne, i.e. love for Laudine is responsible for the sad transformation of Iwein:

> Das kann doch nur heißen: Seine Liebe war so groß, daß die Nichteinhaltung des Termins ihn in Wahnsinn stürzte. Eine merkwürdige Aussage, wenn seine Schuld gerade in Lieblosigkeit liegen sollte.[52]

Thus it is evident that lack of erbärmde rather than lovelessness is the hero's principal failing.

The lesson of Hartmann's Iwein can perhaps best be summarized by stating that there is an inherent danger in elevating any of the courtly values to the level of an absolute. The pursuit of fame and recognition is legitimate as long as it is the byproduct of a praiseworthy endeavor such as the service of others. If it is undertaken for its own sake,

it is a sign of pride and leads to ruthless and merciless conduct - particularly so when it is undertaken without moderation, without *mâze*. The result, then, is not honor but a violation of one of the most fundamental principles of knighthood (a violation of compassion). Iwein can atone for his failure to act according to the dictates of *erbärmde* only by undertaking a series of *aventiuren* in which he willingly - and anonymously - renders aid to the helpless and oppressed. By so doing, he ultimately proves that he possesses the inner honor and integrity which is of far greater importance than the praises of the court.

C. *Parzival*

In our discussion of *Erec*, we noted that Hartmann was one of the earliest medieval German authors to equate the concept of *milte* with the attitude of "*rîcher muot*". Hartmann's definition of *milte* was a clear manifestation of the new spirit of "höveschеit" which, perhaps more than anything else, came to be characteristic of the literature of the courtly period - a spirit that focused more on inner values than on externals, more on the predisposition and intention of the individual than on his actions. Hartmann's writings revealed the growing concern of his era with the essence of courtliness and with the proper role and duties of knighthood; and it was in the literary masterpiece of his contemporary, Wolfram von Eschenbach, that this concern reached its culmination.

When Wolfram informs us in the interlude between Books II and III of *Parzival* that "schildes ambet ist *mîn* art"[53], he provides us with

a substantial clue to the perspective from which he writes his epic. In the words of DeBoor, Wolfram proudly tells us in one brief but meaningful sentence what he is and what he wishes to be: "Schildes Amt, d.h. tätig-kriegerisches Rittertum ist meine angestammte Wesensart und Aufgabe."[54] When we realize the degree to which Wolfram is proudly aware of his identity as a knight, we begin to understand why he, to an even greater extent than the other gifted writers of his era, is so highly conscious of the knightly ethos and possesses such penetrating insight into the essence of "höveschеit". His awareness of the dignity of his knightly vocation impels him to come to terms with the most basic questions of that calling. In doing so, he goes one crucial step further than his contemporaries. As Schwietering observes:

> Aber wenn der Artusroman Hartmanns sich auf die Darstellung der höfischen Kultur und Gesellschaft und ihres ritterlichen Ethos beschränkte, indem er die religiöse Grundlage dieses Ethos als selbstverständlich voraussetzt, und Chrestiens letzter Roman, sein unvollendeter Perceval, das Religiöse in seine Darstellung einbezog, hat Wolfram Religiöses und Ritterliches, Geistliches und Weltliches zur Einheit durchdrungen.[55]

It is precisely Wolfram's ability to achieve a synthesis "zwischen märchenhaftem Ritterroman und historischem Selbstverständnis der geschichtlichen und heilsgeschichtlichen Aufgabe des Rittertums"[56] that places his Parzival at the pinnacle of the Arthurian genre in Germany.

Because Wolfram is more conscious of the knightly ethos than any other writer of his times, and because the concept of milte as "richer

muot" had been introduced into the thought of his era as an integral part of that ethos, we expect Wolfram, more than anyone else, to deal with that concept in his writings. We must therefore carefully consider the following questions: Does Wolfram's definition of milte differ substantially from that of Hartmann? Can it be shown that the concept of milte as "rîcher muot" is in the consciousness of Wolfram as he writes his great epic, or is he indifferent to this concept? Wolfram's epic serves as a critical test case of our earlier assertion that Hartmann's new definition of milte was not the unique creation of his poetic imagination but instead a concept that was shared by the greatest writers of the courtly period.

It is a well-known fact that Wolfram's Parzival deals with the redemption of two realms, both of which have lost their initial vitality. The realm of the Grail is plunged into a state of misfortune by Anfortas, who places his personal interests ahead of his duties as king.[57] The Arthurian realm, in turn, has become so preoccupied with the form and outer trappings of courtly etiquette that it completely loses sight of the true spirit of "höveschеit". That Arthur's close relatives have been imprisoned for twenty years in Schastel Marveile along with 400 other members of courtly society points to the failure of the Round Table to fulfill the purpose for which it was originally created. Parzival and Gawan become the redeemers of their respective realms because they possess certain qualities which make them worthy of that role. Thus we must also consider whether each of these extraordinary individuals possesses the attitude of "rîcher muot" and whether that

attitude is a necessary precondition for the fulfillment of the mission to which each is called.

Analysis of the text reveals that milte appears in Parzival in a variety of contexts. First of all, we find that milte is used in the traditional way in which the word so often occurred in precourtly and early courtly literature, i.e., as part of the conventional depiction of the aristocracy and of courtly life. Wolfram attributes the aristocratic virtue of milte to most of the outstanding knights and rulers in the epic, simply because it is one of the traditional characteristics of men of such stature.[58] Similarly, milte plays an integral role in the various "hochzîten" in the work, because the lavish distribution of gifts is a customary part of such courtly celebrations.[59] On one occasion Wolfram also uses the word milte merely for the sake of providing a convenient rhyme word.[60] The extremely limited usage of the word in this manner suggests that Wolfram, like Hartmann, has a highly sophisticated understanding of its meaning and therefore tends to avoid using it in a superficial way.

Secondly and more importantly, we witness the careful and overt depiction of milte as "rîcher muot" in the epic, principally in the attitude and conduct of Galoes. Although it is not immediately apparent, this quality is also shared by Gahmuret. Thirdly, we observe the slow and more subtle development of this virtue in the title hero - a development that is aided above all by Parzival's encounter with Trevrizent. Finally, we see the deeper (as opposed to the merely conventional) meaning and function of milte within the framework of courtly society.

It is here that we find the most perfect embodiment of the attitude of "rîcher muot" in the person of Gawan, whom Wolfram portrays as the epitome of courtliness and knightly virtue. Here, too, we are made aware of the universality of the concept of milte, which is limited neither to the Christian realm nor to the masculine sex. We are also introduced to several members of courtly society in whom milte is lacking; the negative portrayal of these characters reveals the importance which Wolfram attributes to this virtue. In order to understand Wolfram's interpretation of the concept of milte, we must examine the last three points in detail.

1. Galoes and Gahmuret. It is noteworthy that Wolfram depicts the attitude of "rîcher muot" most directly and concretely long before the birth of the hero of the epic. It is equally significant that this attitude is manifested by a member of Parzival's family: his uncle Galoes. Because Galoes is the eldest son of King Gandin, he inherits the crown, the land and all the possessions of his father in accordance with the law of primogeniture. Thus his younger brother Gahmuret is left virtually destitute. Galoes is in no way obliged to share his inheritance with his brother. By dictate of custom and law, it belongs solely to him. Nevertheless, he welcomes the suggestion of his subjects that he grant Gahmuret an estate within his country as evidence of the latter's claim to the name of Angevin and to the status of free man. His response to his people's request is indicative of true nobility and generosity of spirit. Anjou is his land and Angevin his name, but it is his will that Gahmuret should share these things with him (6, 25ff.).

He further states:

> 'min bruoder der mac sich mêr
> der staeten hilfe an mich versehen,
> denne ich sô gâhes welle jehen.
> er sol mîn ingesinde sîn.
> deiswâr ich tuon iu allen schîn
> daz uns beide ein muoter truoc.
> er hât wênc, und ich genuoc:
> daz sol im teilen sô mîn hant,
> dês mîn saelde niht sî pfant
> vor dem der gît unde nimt:
> uf reht in beder der gezimt.' (6, 30ff.)

Galoes' words reveal that his generosity is prompted by love for his brother. Because the same mother bore them both, Galoes is not content merely to abide by the letter of the law which, in the words of Thomasin, states that "daz reht von reht zaller vrist/ gît eim ieglîchen daz sîn ist." (Thomasin, 13585f.) According to the dictates of justice, i.e., "von reht", Galoes owes his brother nothing. However, according to the spirit of milte, which goes beyond the demands of justice because it is motivated by love - "diu milt gît ouch nâch rehte wol" (Thomasin, 13584, our underlining) - , Galoes is obliged to share what is his; and he is willing and eager to do so. His love for Gahmuret is so great that he is broken-hearted when he learns of his brother's planned departure.[61] And yet, he generously offers to supply Gahmuret with all that is necessary for the journey, even though his fervent desire that his brother remain with him goes unfulfilled.[62]

It would seem that Galoes' attitude of "rîcher muot" stands in direct contrast to the attitude of Gahmuret, who is more intent upon pursuing aventiure and winning prîs and minne[63] than upon reciprocating his brother's love by remaining in the kingdom. Unlike Galoes, whose

most outstanding characteristics are selflessness and generosity, Gahmuret is initially depicted as a restless spirit who tends to place his own wishes ahead of the desires of those who love him most. His departure grieves not only his brother but also his mother, who has only recently lost her husband and will suffer "niwen kumber" (10, 23) if she is robbed of her son. Gahmuret responds to his mother's wish that he stay with her by a reiteration of his own will: "'ich var durch mîne werdekeit/ nâh ritterschaft in fremdiu lant.'" (11, 6f.) Furthermore, his departure from home is the first in a series of departures. He later leaves Belecâne and then Herzeloyde, simply because in his hierarchy of values, aventiure takes precedence over all else.[64]

At least two of the situations in which Gahmuret is depicted as milte would also seem to indicate that he does not necessarily possess the attitude of "rîcher muot" but is instead milte in the merely conventional sense of the word. In the only passage in which milte appears attributively in conjunction with his name, the word is used solely for the sake of rhyme (18, 5f.). Furthermore, when Gahmuret displays great generosity at the celebration of his marriage to Herzeloyde (100, 23ff.), he acts according to the conventional behavior expected of a man of his stature on such occasions. And yet, despite the fact that Gahmuret's most predominant characteristic is his longing for aventiure, and despite the fact that he is occasionally depicted as milte solely within the framework of courtly convention, Wolfram gives us several clear indications that Gahmuret, too, is endowed with the quality of "rîcher muot".

Gahmuret's nobility of spirit is amply demonstrated during his stay in Belecane's kingdom and later in Herzeloyde's realm. As David Blamires notes:

> The situation at the end of the battle illustrates Gahmuret's generosity of spirit towards his enemies. He requests both Razalic and Gaschier to kiss his wife as a sign of reconciliation (cf. Nibelungenlied St. 1113) and generally pardons many of his opponents since they are united by a common kinship, which precludes Gahmuret from extracting his otherwise legal claim to reparations. He liberates Killirjacac, kisses him himself, listens to his story and asks him to fetch Gaschier and Kaylet, with whom he also reconciles himself. He refuses to dispossess Kaylet and enquires what led him to become his opponent . . . . [65]

Blamires goes on to observe: "All the speeches of this section are distinguished by the human approach, full of sympathy and magnanimity, which Gahmuret has towards all those whom he meets."[66] Gahmuret's lavish distribution of gifts at the celebration of his marriage to Belecane is also indicative of generosity of spirit. It is, of course, traditional that generosity be displayed at such a celebration, but Gahmuret's liberality serves the additional function of dissolving the enmity which had existed between the opposing forces before the festivities took place:

> der brûtloufte hôhgezît
> hete dâ vor manegen grôzen strît:
> die wurden sus [by means of milte]ze suone brâht.
> (53, 23ff.)

Blamires provides an excellent analysis of Gahmuret's actions on this occasion:

> Gahmuret makes a generous settlement of the entire situation, sharing out gifts with exceeding liberality 'als al die boume trüegen golt' (53.18),

> and the guests then depart for their homes. The action here can do no more than extol Gahmuret's virtues as a warrior and a knight, and the last episode illustrates his nobility of mind and his generosity. There is otherwise little that can be expressed in such terms as to distinguish Gahmuret completely from all other heroes of this type who are successful in their enterprises and just towards their opponents.[67]

Gahmuret's generosity towards all present illustrates that he is more than just towards his opponents. By giving "nâch rehte" to friends and former foes alike, he proves that he possesses "rîcher muot". At the tournament of Kanvoleis Gahmuret also gives "nâch rehte", i.e., above and beyond what is required of him. To the knights who are less wealthy than he, he makes a gift of the horses which he has won from his unseated opponents (72, 10ff.). By law ("von reht") the horses rightfully belong to him, but the spirit of "rîcher muot" prompts him to be generous.

2. Parzival and Trevrizent. Wolfram's depiction of Galoes and of Gahmuret reveals that the spirit of "rîcher muot" is far from alien to the family of Angevin. It is clearly the most outstanding characteristic of Galoes; and Gahmuret, too, possesses it to a high degree, even though we become aware of this fact far more gradually than we do in the case of his brother. Parzival also has the capacity to develop that spirit. In contrast to his uncle, however, in whom the attitude of "rîcher muot" appears to be an innate characteristic from the very first moment that we meet him, Parzival must undergo a slow and arduous process of development before he manifests that same attitude. The words "traeclîche wîs" (4, 18) fittingly describe the hero of the epic

in all aspects of his development, including the aspect of milte. It can be demonstrated that Parzival lacks this virtue until his meeting with Trevrizent, and that until that time he is a prisoner of the letter of the law, lacking all comprehension of the spirit.

Before Parzival receives the counsel of Gurnemanz, he is repeatedly described by Wolfram as "tump".[68] He leaves his sheltered existence in Soltâne equipped with the sagacious teachings of his mother; but, as Heinz Rupp notes, his unthinking adherence to the letter rather than the spirit of those teachings engenders problems for him and for others:

> Aber gerade das verständnislos wörtliche Befolgen dieser Lehren - und später auch der fast zynischen Worte Keyes (150, 11ff.) - führt Parzival in Situationen, in denen er sich tump verhält und in denen ihn der Dichter als tump bezeichnet - das wird später anders sein.[69]

There is clearly a correlation between Parzival's "tumpheit" and his lack of "rîcher muot", because in his dealings with Ither - the most crucial instance in which he acts according to a literal understanding of what he has learned or heard - Parzival behaves in an ignoble and self-seeking manner:

> The Ither episode marks Parzival's crashingly ignorant irruption into the Arthurian world. All that he is concerned about is to be made a knight, understood in the crudest and most naïve of terms, and he is totally unmoved by causing Ither's death and by the finer elements of knightly conduct. . . . He blunders into a delicate situation, wreaks havoc everywhere and rides away once he has acquired some external display of knightliness in the shape of the Red Knight's armour. His whole behaviour is marked by his childish desire to possess some palpable token of knighthood; he has no idea that more is involved than this.[70]

It is Parzival's tendency to follow the letter of the law which later prompts Gurnemanz to undertake the education of the young and totally inexperienced lad.

Parzival is introduced to the ideals of generosity, mercy and compassion by Gurnemanz. He learns, among other things, that he should have pity on the plight of impoverished knights, alleviating their suffering by means of milte and güete (170, 25ff.). He also discovers that he must have mercy on any opponent whom he defeats, provided that his adversary has not caused him irreparable harm (171, 25ff.). We fully expect that Parzival will put these lessons into practice, because as he departs from Gurnemanz, we are assured by the author that he is now free of the "tumpheit" which was formerly his most predominant characteristic (179, 23; 188, 18f.). Parzival does not fail to meet our expectations, as Rupp observes:

> . . . alle weiteren Taten Parzivals, sein Verhalten in den jetzt folgenden Büchern der Dichtung, entspringen vom menschlich-weltlichen Standpunkt aus betrachtet nicht mehr der tumpheit, sie sind wohl überlegt und mit der ere, dem Ansehen und den Tugenden eines Ritters in Einklang zu bringen.[71]

The words "vom menschlich-weltlichen Standpunkt" are of key significance. Gurnemanz has provided Parzival with the rules of proper knightly and social conduct; his counsel is "wirklich ein mittelalterlicher Fürstenspiegel und entwirft das Ideal höfischer Zucht."[72] Parzival indeed abides by his counsel, but he does so in a markedly literal fashion. When, for example, he later extends mercy to Clamide after defeating him, he does so not out of the innate conviction that it is the right

thing to do but rather in literal conformity to the teachings of Gurnemanz.[73] Prior to his encounter with Trevrizent, Parzival neither receives the epithet milte (except on one occasion, and then only in the traditional sense of the word)[74] nor at any time exhibits behavior which goes beyond the letter of the laws of convention and could thus be construed as unequivocal proof that he possesses the spirit of "rîcher muot".

That Parzival does indeed lack the spirit of "rîcher muot" is most clearly seen in his conduct at Munsalvaesche.[75] Wolfram depicts the agony of Anfortas at length, and he also indicates that Parzival is curious about the many wondrous sights which he beholds. The laws of compassion and empathy dictate that Parzival should inquire about the cause of his host's suffering; but Parzival, who behaves according to the letter of the law of courtly etiquette, fails to ask the question which would alleviate his uncle's torment:

> durch zuht in vrâgens doch verdrôz.
> er dâhte 'mir riet Gurnemanz
> mit grôzen triwen âne schranz,
> ich solte vil gevrâgen niht.
> was op mîn wesen hie geschiht
> die mâze als dort pî îm?
> âne vrâge ich vernîm
> wiez dirre massenîe stêt.' (239, 10ff.)

He does not yet understand that the higher law of human compassion takes precedence over the courtly virtue of zuht, which bade him to remain silent.[76] Later he is admonished by Sigune for his failure to respond to that higher law:

> 'iuch solt iur wirt erbarmet hân,
> an dem got wunder hat getân,

und het gevrâget sîner nôt.
ir lebt, und sît an saelden tôt.' (255, 17ff.)

Cundrie, too, calls attention to his principal failing:

'Er truog iu für den jâmers last.
ir vil ungetriwer gast!
sîn nôt iuch solt erbarmet hân.
daz iu der munt noch werde wan,
ich mein der zungen drinne,
als iuz herze ist rehter sinne!' (316, 1ff.)

Parzival's silence - a silence prompted by zuht - was an indication of lack of "rehter sinne", for which the words "rîcher muot" could rightly be substituted.

Cundrie's statement is part of the reproach which moves Parzival to depart from the Round Table, of which he has just been made a member. He is aware that he has failed at Munsalvaesche, and he sets out in steadfast pursuit of the Grail, firmly intending to right the wrong which he has committed (330, 18ff.); but he does not instantly acquire the insight which will ultimately make him worthy of redeeming the Grail kingdom. His attitude is at first one of resentment:

> Parzival ist gerechterweise verklagt, und er ahnt es wohl; ihn brennt Amfortas' Qual im Herzen, aber er sieht nicht ein, warum gerade ihn dies Versäumnis hatte treffen müssen, und er hadert mit Gott, daß er diese Schuld und Entehrung über ihn hat kommen lassen.[77]

Because God has allowed disgrace to befall him, Parzival angrily and arrogantly renounces His service (332, 1ff.), and he maintains this attitude throughout his wanderings which precede Book IX of the epic.

It is in Book IX that we witness the gradual transformation of Parzival from a proud knight who serves the letter of the law to one who achieves an understanding of the spirit and thus begins to develop

the attitude of "rîcher muot". The first indication of a change in Parzival's attitude is seen in his response to Sigune's reminder of his failure to ask the question of Anfortas: "'Ich warp als der den schaden hât,'/ sprach er. 'liebiu niftel, [gip mir] rât . . . .'" (442, lf.). Parzival's spontaneous acknowledgement of guilt as well as his request for advice are two unmistakable signs of a developing humility. A further indication of Parzival's change in attitude and of a growing understanding of his true situation is found in his encounter with the pilgrim family. It is more than coincidental that Wolfram first describes the humble garb of the penitents and then Parzival's rich attire:

> Wie oft hat Wolfram zuvor den Glanz, den
> stolzen Prunk der Rüstung geschildert; jetzt
> aber erscheint sie als etwas ganz anderes.
> Die Tochter des Kahenis empfindet es sogleich:
> der Panzer, ruft sie aus, durchkältet den
> Fremdling bis aufs Mark (499:2 ff.).[78]

The cold from which Parzival suffers "is emblematic of his spiritual deprivation and his exclusion from both the Grail and Arthurian circles."[79] He clearly perceives the contrast between the pilgrims and himself, between their devotion to Christ and his renunciation of God; and his realization gives rise to a spirit of repentance in his heart. For the first time in many years he turns his thoughts to his Creator and places himself in the hands of divine providence, allowing himself to be led along the path which God chooses for him. That path leads to Trevrizent.

Despite the fact that Parzival has shown the first signs of a changing attitude, his conversion is not yet complete, for he has not

fully overcome his pride. That pride is evidenced once again in his conversations with Trevrizent. Although his first words to the hermit constitute a humble admission of guilt ("'hêr nu gebt mir rât:/ ich bin ein man der sünde hât.'", 456, 29f.), he is still very self-assured and proud of his knightly prowess.[80] Thus he wonders whether his formidable appearance has not inspired fear in his host, a question which springs from an overabundance of self-awareness: "'dô ich iuch vor mir stênde sach,/ vorht ir iu iht, do ich zuo ziu reit?'" (457, 19f.). Even after Trevrizent has explained to him the most profound mysteries of the Christian faith and of the Grail, Parzival persists in his exalted self-esteem, unable to believe that God will fail to call a knight as outstanding as he to the service of the Grail:

> 'Mac riterschaft des lîbes prîs
> unt doch der sêle pardîs
> bejagen mit schilt und ouch mit sper,
> sô was riterschaft mîn ger.
> ich streit ie swâ ich striten vant,
> sô daz mîn werlîchiu hant
> sich naehert dem prîse.
> ist got an strîte wîse,
> der sol mich dar benennen,
> daz si mich da bekennen:
> mîn hant dâ strîtes niht verbirt.' (472, 1ff.)

And yet, by the time that Parzival departs from Trevrizent, he is a humble man. Before explaining the manner in which his change of heart comes about, it is essential that we consider the instrument which evokes that change. The grace of God has brought Parzival to Trevrizent, and it is through the good counsel of Trevrizent that he becomes disposed towards humility and wisdom.

Trevrizent is able to effect a change in his nephew's attitude because he, too, has undergone a great change. He informs Parzival that he does not fear him, because he had also been a knight:

'ich was ein rîter als ir sît,
der ouch nâch hôher minne ranc.
etswenne ich sündebaern gedanc
gein der kiusche parrierte.
mîn lebn ich dar ûf zierte,
daz mir genâde taete ein wîp.
dez hât vergezzen nu mîn lîp.' (458, 6ff.)

He has exchanged his former life of external honor and splendor for an existence of the utmost austerity, devoting himself to fasting, prayer and meditation. The reason for his transformation springs from the depths of selflessness and self-sacrifice: Upon witnessing the distress of Anfortas, he promptly renounced his life of ease and worldly honor so that God might take pity on his brother:

'mîn venje viel ich nider:
dâ lobet ich der gotes kraft,
daz ich deheine rîterschaft
getaete nimmer mere,
daz got durch sîn êre
mînem bruoder hulfe vor der nôt.' (480, 10ff.)

Although he does penance for his own sins, his primary concern is the welfare of his brother. He clearly epitomizes the spirit of "rîcher muot", taking upon himself the burden of the sins of his brother and later of Parzival's sins as well (502, 25ff.).

Because of Trevrizent's nobility and generosity of spirit, Parzival enjoys a feeling of well-being in his company - a feeling that stands in stark contrast to the isolation and loneliness to which he had unwillingly become accustomed:

Parzivâl mit sinne,
durch die getriwe minne
dier gein sînem wirte truoc,
in dûhte er hete baz genuoc
dan dô sîn pflac Gurnemanz,
und do sô maneger frouwen varwe glanz
ze Munsalvaesche für in gienc,
da er wirtschaft vome grâle enpfienc. (486, 13ff.)

Wolfram's description of Parzival's stay with his uncle calls to mind Erec's sense of well-being in the presence of the impoverished but nonetheless magnanimous Koralus, whose good will provided him with all and more than he required. Wolfram at first makes fun of the privations which Trevrizent and Parzival endure, only to apologize for his levity and to focus on the honorable motives for their actions:

si dolten herzen riuwe
niht wan durch rehte triuwe,
ân alle missewende.
von der hôhsten hende
enpfiengens umb ir kumber solt:
got was und wart in bêden holt. (487, 17ff.)

Trevrizent is able to bring about a change in Parzival's attitude because he possesses the attitude of "rîcher muot". Moreover, he not only comprehends but also lives the spirit of the Christian religion; hence he is able to convey that spirit to Parzival.

Until his encounter with Trevrizent, Parzival had had only a superficial understanding of the teachings of Christianity. In the words of von Simson, "Parzival wird hernach bekehrt, indem er die christliche Erlösungslehre kennenlernt und versteht."[81] Furthermore, all that he learns from Trevrizent - his guilt in the death of his mother and of Ither as well as in the prolonged suffering of Anfortas - clears the way for the admission "das elementar und erlösend aus ihm herausstürzt"[82]:

ir sult mit râtes triuwe
klagen mîne tumpheit.
der ûf Munsalvaesche reit,
unt der den rehten kumber sach,
unt der deheine vrâge sprach,
daz bin ich unsaelec barn:
sus hân ich, hêrre, missevarn.' (488, 14ff.)

Rupp correctly analyzes the significance of these words:

> Mit diesem Bekenntnis ist alles gewonnen. Parzival hat sich durch die Lehren Trevrizents zur rechten Erkenntnis durchgerungen, er hat die Sinnlosigkeit seines Hasses gegen Gott erkannt, er hat die Verantwortung für alles, was er aus tumpheit, geistlicher ignorantia, falsch gemacht hat, im Wissen um seine erbsündige Belastung auf sich genommen. Jetzt hat er nicht mehr nur die weltliche tumpheit, das weltliche torencleit, abgelegt, sondern auch die geistliche tumpheit. Er ist wissend, gläubig und demütig.[83]

Having put aside his pride and confessed the full extent of his guilt, Parzival departs from his uncle to follow the course which the latter has prescribed for him. Thereafter we begin to find evidence that he has acquired the same spirit of "rîcher muot" which characterizes his uncle.

A number of examples of Parzival's change of heart could be given, but the one which most clearly illustrates that Parzival no longer acts according to the letter of the law is seen somewhat later when his friend Gawan is engaged in conflict with Gramoflanz. Gawan explicitly declares that he will allow no one to fight with Gramoflanz in his place; but Parzival, knowing that Gawan has been weakened and exhausted in a previous battle, steals out to confront his friend's opponent. In contrast to his former youthful behavior, he deliberately disobeys an explicit command, because he is moved to do so by concern for Gawan's

welfare, and that concern takes precedence over obedience to the letter of the law.

Because Parzival has overcome his pride and gained the insight which he had clearly lacked during his first stay at Munsalvaesche, because he has steadfastly sought to make right the wrong which his "tumpheit" had prompted him to commit, and because he no longer acts according to the letter of the law but according to the spirit of "rîcher muot", he is worthy of becoming the redeemer of the family of the Grail. It is indicative of his change of heart that he responds to Cundrie's apology for having cursed him, humbly acknowledging that he is to be king of the Grail not by virtue of his own merits but by the grace and favor of God (783, 4ff.). Looking back at the events of the past, Parzival is able to recognize that Cundrie would not have cursed him, had he acted properly at Munsalvaesche:

> 'iedoch het ich niht missetân,
> ir het mich zorns etswenne erlân.
> done wasez et dennoch niht min heil . . . .'
> (783, 13ff.)

It can rightly be said that possession of the attitude of "rîcher muot" was a necessary precondition for the fulfillment of the mission to which Parzival was called. The predisposition to act generously and nobly is antithetical to pride and to self-seeking behavior, just as it is antithetical to an unthinking, literal adherence to law and convention. Only when Parzival has overcome his "tumpheit" - an attribute which is largely synonymous with the lack of "rîcher muot" - is he able to alleviate the suffering of Anfortas and to assume his position as King of the Grail.

3. Gawan and the courtly realm. Just as the kingdom of the Grail was in need of a redeemer because of the conduct of Anfortas, so, too, is the Arthurian realm in need of revitalization, for it has fallen into a state of inefficacy and no longer fulfills the ideals which it is meant to uphold. Book VI presents us with the picture of a court which perfectly observes the form of "curtoisie" while having totally lost sight of the spirit.

When Parzival arrives at Arthur's encampment, Wolfram describes the courteous greeting which Parzival receives, the elegant garb which is given to him, the kissing rituals and all the social amenities which accompany his reception into the membership of the Round Table. As Parzival takes his place between Gawan and Clamide, we seem to see the Arthurian realm at the height of its perfection; but the arrival of Cundrie at precisely that moment destroys all semblance of ideality. Cundrie's words reveal the true situation:

> 'tavelrunder prîses kraft
> hât erlemt ein geselleschaft
> die drüber gap hêr Parzivâl,
> der ouch dort treit diu rîters mâl.' (315, 7ff.)

Parzival has the outward signs of knighthood but lacks the inner qualities which alone make one deserving of membership in that class. Although he has slain Ither against all rules of knightly combat, and although he lacked the compassion to ask the question which would have healed the suffering Anfortas, he has been granted the honor of admission to the Round Table. Cundrie rightly states that Parzival's external beauty in no way corresponds to his inner state: "'ich dunke iuch ungehiure,/ und bin gehiurer doch dan ir.'" (315, 24f.) What she says

of him could rightly be said of the entire Arthurian court as well, for as it celebrates in a carefree manner, four queens and 400 maidens sit captive in Schastel Marveile, and not one knight has fulfilled his calling by undertaking their rescue.

Clearly the Arthurian realm is in a state of disgrace - a state brought on by the observance of the letter rather than the spirit of the law which it is meant to represent. Only a knight who possesses that spirit will be capable of redeeming the realm, and that knight is Gawan. Wolfram depicts Gawan not only as an individual who is milte in the conventional sense of the word[84] but also as one who clearly possesses the spirit of "rîcher muot". It is in part this quality which makes him both capable and worthy of the role of redeemer.[85]

That Gawan at all times manifests generosity and nobility of spirit is apparent not only in his major endeavor at Schastel Marveile but in his less momentous undertakings as well. Mohr's assertion that Gawan is "ein Ritter, durch dessen pures Dabeisein die Welt, wo er auch hinkommt, menschlicher wird"[86] is substantiated throughout the epic. It is characteristic of Gawan that although he is on his way to a confrontation with the King of Ascalun - a confrontation that is essential if he is to preserve his own honor and vindicate the reputation of his unjustly maligned father - , he decides to involve himself in a conflict for which he bears no responsibility. Upon hearing of the sorry state of affairs in Bearosche and of the plight of Prince Lippaut, Gawan feels compelled to further investigate the situation, even though delay or injury would seriously jeopardize his own urgent mission. Gawan's

generous decision to intervene initially earns him the scorn and mockery of Obie, who insultingly refers to him as a lowly merchant (353, 26) and does all that she can to malign him:

> diu bôt ir hazzes genuoc
> Gâwân, dern âne schulde truoc:
> si wolt im werben schande. (360, 7ff.)

Despite her attitude, however, and despite her insults, which a knight of lesser magnanimity of spirit would not tolerate, Gawan does not waiver from his decision to render aid. In the end, Obie is one of the principal beneficiaries of Gawan's intervention:

> Im 7. Buch schlichtet sich in seiner Gegenwart der Streit der jungen Liebesleute Meljanz und Obie. Jünglingshaftes Ehrprinzip und Mädchenherbigkeit, die sich zeitgemäß an die Prinzipien des Minnedienstes hält, stehen da widereinander. Die beiden jungen Prinzipienreiter werden gedemütigt - und finden zueinander.[87]

It is a measure not only of Gawan's growing love for Orgeluse but also of his nobility of spirit that he willingly endures abuse from her which far exceeds the harsh treatment meted out to him by Obie. In exchange for his offer of steadfast service, Gawan receives only insults from Orgeluse:

> si sprach 'west willekomn, ir gans.
> nie man sô grôze tumpheit dans,
> ob ir mich diens welt gewern.
> âwê wie gern irz möht verbern!' (515, 13ff.)

When he loses his horse to Urians after stopping to aid the wounded knight, Orgeluse is unimpressed by his kindness and promptly calls him "tumbe" (530, 10) for continuing his journey in her service. Seeing his discomfort as he proceeds with the worn-out horse of Malcreatiure, she only laughs at him and continues to make abusive remarks. Gawan,

however, patiently tolerates her constant reproach, almost as if he intuitively understands the reasons for her cold, unfeeling behavior:

> Anfangs, als Orgeluse so garstig zu ihm ist, behandelt Gawan sie behutsam, unangreifbar und hartnäckig, wie der Psychiater mit seinem "Fall" umgeht. Wenn sie ihm grob kommt, gibt er ihr recht, wenn sie über ihn spottet, hört er nicht zu; eine Peinlichkeit nach der andern, das Pech mit dem igelhaarigen Knappen, die Gemeinheit des Spitzbuben Urjanz, den Ritt und Kampf auf dem elenden Klepper nimmt er hin und handelt in der verquersten Lage zweckentsprechend.[88]

Because of his patient and unswerving service in the face of continuous disdain and ingratitude, Gawan is ultimately able to effect a total change in Orgeluse's attitude. Only after the "Abenteuer der gefährlichen Furt", when the repentant Orgeluse exhibits genuine human emotion, does Gawan finally admonish her for having mocked all of knighthood through her mockery of him (612). Gawan's willingness to enter into Orgeluse's service with no assurance of eventual reward, along with his ability to tolerate remarks which would immediately alienate a knight whose chief character trait was pride, indicates that he possesses the attitude of "rîcher muot".

A somewhat more subtle but nonetheless important indication that "rîcher muot" is indeed one of the principal character traits of Gawan is seen in his conduct after Orgeluse abandons him. The sequence of events is significant at this point in the epic. Shortly before Orgeluse boards the ferry, leaving Gawan behind with only the vaguest assurance that they will meet again, Gawan sees Schastel Marveile for the first time. Although he does not yet know with absolute certainty that he has arrived at the castle of which Cundrie had spoken, he intuitively

senses the special aura which surrounds it, and this awareness remains in his thoughts until circumstances enable him to seek further information:

> sîn herze unt diu ougen jâhen
> daz si erkanten noch gesâhen
> decheine burc nie der gelîch. (534, 21ff.)

Orgeluse's departure is followed by Gawan's confrontation with Lischois, which leaves him exhausted. He therefore accepts Plippalinot's offer of hospitality, along with the unlimited desire of his host to do all that he can to tend to the needs of his guest.

Plippalinot places his daughter Bene entirely at Gawan's disposal. He goes off to bed, leaving her alone with Gawan, whereupon Wolfram assures us: "het er iht hin zir gegert,/ ich waen si hetes in gewert." (552, 27f.) Because Gawan has been deprived of the company of his beloved and longs for her love, and because he is free to do with Bene as he wishes, we might expect that he will take advantage of the beautiful maiden as a substitute for Orgeluse. But Gawan, who is noble of spirit, refrains from using Bene, even when she herself tells him, "'hêrre, gebietet über mich:/ swaz ir gebiet, daz leist ich.'" (554, 17f.) Instead of responding to her offer, he asks her for information about the ladies whom he had seen in the wondrous castle; and he continues to ask questions when her father appears, despite the warnings of both to ask no further. When he learns that disaster awaits him at the castle, he states:

> 'mir waere leit,
> op mîn gemach an arbeit
> von disen frouwen hinnen rite,
> ichn versuocht ê baz ir site.

ich hân ouch ê von in vernomen:
sît ich sô nâhen nu bin komen,
mich ensol des niht betrâgen,
ich enwellez durch si wâgen.' (557, 15ff.)

It is significant that although Gawan has been parted from his beloved, his foremost desire is not to ride out in pursuit of her but to alleviate the distress of the prisoners at Schastel Marveile. In Gawan's hierarchy of values, his own interests take second place to the interests of others and his duties as a knight. Four hundred ladies are in distress, and because they have not been rescued, the Round Table is in a state of shame and disgrace. To help them and to remove the blot from the reputation of the Arthurian court takes precedence over his personal concerns.

Gawan is the most outstanding representative of the attitude of "rîcher muot" in the Christian realm[89], but that attitude is not limited to the world of Christianity. The heathen Feirefiz is portrayed as a generous man and as the incorporation of "rîcher muot" as well.[90] The portrayal of Feirefiz, of whom it is said "sô milter lîp gesouc ni brust" (328, 27), in some ways parallels that of his uncle Galoes. When Feirefiz learns his brother's identity, his immediate reaction is to offer Parzival the lands which he has inherited from his father and which are rightfully his:

'ich wil lâzen dir zwei rîchiu lant,
dienstlîche immer dîner hant,
diu mîn vater und der dîne erwarp,
do der künec Isenhart erstarp,
Zazamanc und Azagouc.' (750, 15ff.)

Spontaneous generosity prompted by love is an innate characteristic of Parzival's brother. It is this characteristic which prompts him to beseech his brother-in-law Anfortas to accompany him to his realm and to

partake of his vast wealth:

> der getoufte Feirafîz
> an sînen swâger leite vlîz
> mit bete dan ze varne
> und niemen niht ze sparne
> vor im al sîner rîchen habe. (819, 9ff.)

Similarly, he wishes to take Lohengrin with him so that his nephew might benefit from all that he has to offer. Feirefiz constantly seeks the opportunity to share what is his, as is evidenced by Wolfram's lengthy description of the heathen nobleman's generosity before his departure to accompany Parzival to Munsalvaesche. Kings, princes, barons, impoverished knights and minstrels alike are the recipients of his generosity; no one is overlooked.

Wolfram's depiction of Feirefiz suggests that milte is a universal concept. Just as it is not limited to the Christian realm, so, too, is it found among women as well as among men. Thomasin reflects the consensus of his era when he states:

> sô stât milte allen liuten wol:
> ein ieglîch vrowe milt wesen sol;
> doch zimt diu milt den rîtern baz
> denne den vrouwen, wizzet daz. (Thomasin, 973ff.)

His observation appears particularly appropriate when we consider that at a significant juncture in the epic it is Cundrie alone - and not the knights of the Round Table - who exhibits the attitude of "rîcher muot". Cundrie's ultimate concern is the welfare of others. Although she is not an immediate member of the Grail family, as is Parzival, she alone is grief-stricken by the fate of Anfortas. When she speaks of his misfortune, she is overcome by sorrow:

Cundrî was selbe sorgens pfant.
al weinde si die hende want,
daz manec zaher den andern sluoc:
grôz jâmer se ûz ir ougen truoc.
die maget lêrt ir triuwe
wol klagen ir herzen riuwe. (318, 5ff.)

She is also distressed about the plight of the prisoners at Schastel Marveile, unable to understand why no one at the Arthurian court has undertaken their rescue. Cundrie's hideous appearance contrasts sharply to the beauty of the knights whom she addresses, just as her deep concern for the well-being of others contrasts to the knights' indifference. It may be said that it is her compassion for the suffering of others and her reproach of the inactive knights that brings the problems of the Arthurian realm into focus. By the specificity of her charges she awakens the consciousness of the knights, and particularly of Gawan.

In addition to providing us with a number of characters who personify the virtue of milte, Wolfram also depicts its antithesis in the attitude and behavior of three minor figures in the epic: the fisherman whom Parzival meets shortly after his initial encounter with Sigune, and the knights Keye and Liddamus. Because milte is depicted as an essentially aristocratic virtue, it does not surprise us that the lowly fisherman is portrayed as the embodiment of avarice. Stressing his "ungeslähte", Wolfram describes him as "ein arger wirt", "vilân" and "aller güete laere" (142; 143). When Parzival tells the fisherman of his hunger, he receives the following brusque reply:

der sprach 'in gaebe ein halbez brôt
iu niht ze drîzec jâren.
swer mîner milte vâren
vergebene wil, der sûmet sich.

ine sorge umb niemen danne um mich,
dar nâch um mîniu kindelîn.' (142, 22ff.)

Clearly the fisherman is interested only in his own welfare and completely lacks the attitude of "rîcher muot". His selfishness is also revealed by his complete change of attitude only when Parzival offers him payment in exchange for his help: "'wiltu belîben, süezez kint,/ dich êrent al die hinne sint.'" (143, 7f.) Few other characters in the epic are portrayed as unfavorably as the fisherman, and it is his lack of milte and güete which places him in such a negative light.

Keye, too, is seen in a negative light at the end of Book XIII because of the petty and envious attitude which he displays towards his friend Gawan. In contrast to his fellow knights who grieved because of Gawan's long absence and now joyfully ride out to meet him, Keye voices his jealousy of Gawan's display of wealth and of the throng of ladies who surround him. Wolfram notes that a true friend rejoices when honor is accorded to his friend, and that only "der ungetriuwe" laments when good fortune befalls one who is dear to him (675). Keye, like the fisherman, thinks only of himself. His arm is broken and Gawan has not yet avenged him, hence Gawan is the recipient of his wrath. Keye's attitude prompts Wolfram to reflect: "sô sint die muotes kranken/ gîtes unde hazzes vol." (675, 24f.) The formulation "muotes kranken" is the antithesis of "rîcher muot", which excludes hatred, envy and selfishness.

Liddamus is the final member of a trio of characters in the epic in whom the virtue of milte is sorely lacking. Wolfgang Mohr makes a penetrating and excellent analysis of this thoroughly negative figure

to which very little need be added.[91] For purposes of our discussion of milte, however, it must be noted that Liddamus is depicted as the very antithesis of nobility of spirit. Mohr stresses the contrast between Liddamus and Kingrimursel, who appear respectively as "Vertreter eines falschen und eines richtigen politisch-gesellschaftlichen Prinzips" and as "Antagonisten in einer Komödie, in der - wie es bei Wolfram nicht anders zu erwarten ist - die Personen selbst und ihr individueller Menschenwert und -unwert wichtiger sind als die Prinzipien, die sie vertreten."[92]

Kingrimursel, the representative of "das politische Ethos des Landesfürsten vom alten Adel",[93] is deeply upset that Gawan has been attacked by Vergulaht's men. The attack detracts from his honor, since he had given Gawan his promise of safe conduct, and from the honor of the king as well, since he is a servant of the king. Moreover, he believes that Gawan is guilty of the murder of his former liege lord, and he is willing to challenge Gawan as a matter of knightly principle and ethics. Liddamus, on the other hand, appears to lack all principles. In the first place, he is a coward, as Kingrimursel's reproach reveals:

'man sol iu wol gelouben
daz iuch nie mannes ougen
gesâhn ze vorderst dâ man streit:
iu was ie strîten wol sô leit
daz ir der fluht begundet.
dennoch ir mêr wol kundet:
swâ man ie gein strîte dranc,
dâ taet ir wîbes widerwanc.' (417, 21ff.)

Furthermore, he is vain and boastful: When confronted with criticism,

he expresses his self-satisfaction ("'ich pin iedoch mir selben holt.'", 419, 10) and reminds his critics of his high station:

> 'ob ir fürsten mînre genôze
> der edelste und der hoehste birt,
> ich pin ouch [landes] herre und landes wirt.
> ich hân in Galicîâ
> beidiu her unde dâ
> mange burc reht unz an Verdrûn.' (419, 16ff.)

Finally, he is a flatterer who has no deeds but only empty words by means of which to ingratiate himself with the king. As a justification for his passive attitude, i.e., cowardice, towards the alleged murderer Gawan, he declares:

> 'nu rechet hêrren unt den mâc.
> mich sol vermîden iwer bâc.
> iwern vetern (ir wârt sîn man),
> swer dem sîn leben an gewan,
> Dâ rechetz. ich entet im niht:
> ich waene mirs och iemen giht.
> iwern vetern sol ich wol verklagn:
> sîn sun die krône nâch im sol tragn:
> derst mir ze hêrren hôch genuoc.' (419, 27ff.)

Liddamus approaches life "mit rede aldâ bereit", "mit spaehlîchen worten" (418, 26ff.). He is a hollow character, devoid of depth and substance, unwilling to jeopardize his comfort and safety for the sake of principle. Mohr notes that Wolfram finds Liddamus totally repulsive and unappealing;[94] we might add that this is the case because of the fact that all the failings of this character can be subsumed under the heading of "muotes krank".

4. Summary. In our introduction to Parzival, we posed two major questions about Wolfram's concept of milte which can now be answered on the basis of our analysis of the text. First of all, does Wolfram's definition of milte differ substantially from that of Hartmann? In

other words, can it be shown that Wolfram is conscious of the concept of milte as "rîcher muot" as he writes the epic, or is he indifferent to the concept? If we consider the seventeen instances in which Wolfram uses a form of the word milte, we notice that in almost every case the word occurs within the framework of courtly convention.[95] Furthermore, we rarely encounter the formulation "rîcher muot" in the epic. But although Wolfram is not as explicit as Hartmann in associating milte with "rîcher muot", that association occurs implicitly throughout the work. Wolfram is highly conscious of the importance of that attribute, and he endows his positive and sympathetic characters, both major and minor, with that quality. In the case of Galoes, Gawan and Feirefiz, it is immediately apparent that each personifies the attitude of "rîcher muot"; in the case of Gahmuret and Parzival, this virtue develops more slowly, but each possesses it nevertheless. Conversely, the most unsympathetic characters in the work - the fisherman, Keye and Liddamus - lack the attitude of "rîcher muot", and it is in large measure this deficiency in their character which makes them appear to be so negative.

Secondly, we asked whether the attitude of "rîcher muot" was a necessary precondition for the fulfillment of the missions to which Parzival and Gawan were called. We noted that Parzival was unworthy of the role of redeemer until he overcame his pride and until he ceased to obey the letter of the law and learned to comprehend the spirit. We also noted that pride is antithetical to the attitude of "rîcher muot" and that nobility and generosity of mind sometimes compel one to disobey a literal command, as Parzival did when he intervened on behalf of

Gawan in the latter's conflict with Gramoflanz, but as he failed to do at Munsalvaesche, placing zuht ahead of mercy and compassion. We can therefore conclude that the attitude of "rîcher muot" was indeed a prerequisite for the fulfillment of Parzival's role as redeemer of the Grail family. Similarly, we observed that "rîcher muot" was an innate characteristic of Gawan, who willingly intervened on behalf of others at great personal risk and who possessed the humility to serve even those who abused and scorned him. This quality, coupled with courage, loyalty and personal integrity, made him capable of breathing new life into the Arthurian realm which had lost sight of the noble ideals which it was meant to uphold. The implicit occurrence of milte as "rîcher muot" as an attribute of the positive characters in the epic, and especially its occurrence as one of the most outstanding attributes of the two key figures in the work - Parzival and Gawan - reveal the importance which Wolfram attributes to this concept.

D. Tristan und Isold

We have chosen to conclude this chapter with a discussion of the meaning and function of milte in Tristan not only because we wished to consider the masterpieces of the Arthurian genre in chronological order[96] but also because we are aware of the many difficulties involved in dealing with Gottfried's epic. Even though we are primarily concerned with a single aspect of the epic as opposed to an interpretation of the work in its entirety, we are nevertheless confronted with several problems. First of all, as an individual, Gottfried is far less accessible to his

readers than Wolfram:

> Selbst wo er den Leser in seine geheimen Gedanken und in die innersten Probleme seiner Liebesauffassung einzubeziehen scheint, verschleiert er sofort wieder alles, damit ja kein grobes Gemüt Zugang zu seinem Werk finde, das nur für einen kleinen Kreis von Eingeweihten bestimmt ist. Gottfried hat eine regelrechte Kunst daraus entwickelt, in unerhört verschlungenen und an raffinierten Wortspielen reichen Sätzen ein Problem so zu formulieren, daß der Sinn offensichtlich ist und man sich durchaus eingeweiht glaubt, daß aber doch eine sichere Interpretation solcher und anderer Stellen, die oberflächlich einander zu widersprechen scheinen, zu fast unüberwindlichen Schwierigkeiten führt.[97]

When Wolfram interrupts his narration to address us with personal observations and digressions, we are generally able to perceive what he means. Furthermore, we come to know him as an individual on the basis of his commentaries. Gottfried, on the other hand, often presents us with seemingly puzzling statements, and he never reveals himself to us as clearly and directly as does Wolfram.

A second difficulty arises from the fact that the epic lacks a conclusion. Thus we cannot know with certainty all the far-reaching consequences of the presence of _milte_ within the epic or of its absence at critical junctures in the work. We do not know whether Gottfried failed to finish the work because he died or because he was unable to satisfactorily resolve the complex problems with which his _Tristan_ deals. If we accept the continuator's indications that death prevented the poet from completing the epic, then it seems probable that Gottfried would have completed it in much the same way that Thomas of Britain did. And yet, as Brogsitter notes, " . . . selbst bei äußerlich gleichem

Sachverhalt wäre ja damit zu rechnen, daß sich bei Gottfrieds raffinierter Darstellungs- und Verschleierungskunst eine durchaus andere Interpretation ergäbe."[98]

Thirdly and most importantly, we are confronted with the problem of the relationship of Tristan to other works of the Arthurian genre and to the ideals of knighthood and courtliness. We noted earlier that although Tristan does not fit the traditional definition of Arthurian romance, literary scholars commonly include it in discussions of that genre. King Arthur and the knights of the Round Table do not play a role in the epic as they did in the three previous works which we discussed. Moreover, on the two occasions on which Arthur and the Round Table are mentioned by Gottfried, they clearly take second place to the delights of minne.[99] While Wolfram writes his epic from the viewpoint of "schildes ambet", i.e. "dem tätigen Rittertum, das sich im Artusrittertum rein darstellt", Gottfried develops his work "vom gebildeten Manne her, zu dem ritterliche Qualitäten zwar gehören, die ihn aber nicht bestimmen."[100] Knighthood as such does not play the most decisive role in Tristan. As DeBoor observes, "Für Gottfried sind die ritterlich-kämpferischen Motive, die sein Stoff enthält, ohne Eigenwert. Sie sind nur Hebel, um Handlung in Bewegung zu setzen."[101] Riwalin's participation in Marke's war serves the purpose of bringing him together with Blancheflur; his death in battle against Morgan (and the subsequent demise of his beloved) are present in the work so that Tristan, as his name indicates, may be born under the sign of suffering and death. Similarly, Tristan's heroic deeds - his confrontation with Morolt and

the destruction of the dragon - serve not so much to demonstrate his knightly prowess as to give him access to Isolde. Almost without exception, his later knightly activities center around his love for Isolde; even his extraordinary feats after his final separation from her are undertaken as an attempt, however futile, to forget her.

Brogsitter argues convincingly that "das Heldish-Ritterliche in Tristan" is to a degree "abgewertet, ja fast ironisiert":[102]

> Bezeichnend dafür ist, daß Gottfried die Gelegenheit der Schwertleite nicht zu einer ausmalenden Schilderung nutzt, sondern statt dessen den berühmten "Literaturkatalog" einschiebt. Die Kampfschilderungen entbehren bei ihm allen ritterlichen Glanzes; eher wird nüchtern das oft rein zufällige im Ausgange angedeutet und beim Titelhelden Tristan mehr Nachdruck auf seine Klugheit und Verschlagenheit als auf seine Stärke und seine ritterlichen Eigenschaften gelegt.[103]

What matters to Gottfried more than rittertum is "höveschеit", and it is the poet's particular conception of the meaning of this term that is significant from the point of view of milte. Brogsitter asserts that Gottfried is concerned with "höveschеit" "insoweit sie das begreifende und nachfühlende Vermögen der 'edelen herzen' einschließt, dem Leiden der Liebenden zu folgen und Verständnis für die unerhörten Ansprüche einer wahrhaften Liebe zu haben."[104] The much-disputed term "edelen herzen" has a somewhat broader meaning than the one which Brogsitter attributes to it, however. Wolfgang Spiewok, who carefully analyzed every occurrence of the words "edel" and "edelez herze" in the epic, presents us with a more precise definition of these terms. The meaning of "edel", he says,

> . . . scheint also bereits aus den engen Schranken einer Bezeichnung der Zugehörigkeit zur herrschenden Klasse herauszutreten und in die Richtung einer allgemeinen Hochschätzung der betreffenden Persönlichkeit zu tendieren, wobei also auch Angehörige des Bürgertums gemeint sein können.[105]

In a similar fashion, the phrases "edelez herze" and "edeler muot" are "offensichtlich mit der Vorstellung hoher charakterlicher und bildungsmäßiger Qualitäten verknüpft."[106] Spiewok draws a far-reaching conclusion from these findings:

> Wir halten fest: Das Bild der feudalhöfischen Epik ist geprägt von dem adeligen Ideal luxuriöser Lebensführung; der Einfluß dieses Ideals äußert sich in breiten beschreibenden Partien, die der Schilderung äußeren Prunkes dienen. Gottfried löst sich von dieser Gestaltungstendenz und wendet sich bewußt gegen sie. An die Stelle der Beschreibung äußeren Glanzes setzt er die Enthüllung inneren, charakterlichen Wertes.[107]

It is our conviction that for Gottfried, "höveschеit" is synonymous with the inner dignity and worth of the individual. Of course, Hartmann and Wolfram also associate "höveschеit" primarily with inner values; but Gottfried's tendency towards understatement in the description of the outer trappings of knighthood makes that association all the more striking. It is also our contention that the treatment of milte in the epic serves to corroborate the relationship between courtliness and the inner nobility and dignity of the individual. The word milte appears only six times in Tristan, and in each instance it is used in a purely traditional, conventional manner. It is mentioned either as an attribute of an outstanding knight or lord or as a desirable and necessary characteristic which a knight should possess.[108] The infrequent occurrence of the word milte, along with its limitation to the realm of convention,

indicates that Gottfried is only moderately interested in the traditional outward displays of generosity. We believe, however, that he is highly conscious of the attitude of milte as "rîcher muot", and that it is typical of his subtle and often indirect approach that this attitude occurs implicitly rather than explicitly in the epic. The attitude of "rîcher muot" is displayed in varying degrees by four characters in the work: by Tristan, by Marke, and above all by Rual and Floraete. Conversely, the lack of "rîcher muot" which characterizes the noblemen of Marke's realm is in large measure responsible for what we assume with relative certainty to be the tragic outcome of the work.

1. Tristan. In her book entitled Die Hauptgestalten in Gottfrieds Tristan, Gisela Hollandt notes that the life of the title hero of the epic is divided into three stages: the events from childhood to the drinking of the love potion, Tristan's life with Isolde, and his later life without her.[109] It is primarily in the first stage of his life that Tristan displays the attitude of "rîcher muot". After Tristan is set ashore by the merchants who had abducted him, his first reaction is to weep and then to implore God to help him in the perilous circumstances in which he finds himself. It is, however, characteristic of Tristan even at his very young age that he does not indulge in self-pity but instead attempts to find a solution to the problem which confronts him. Having overcome his initial grief for his own plight, he automatically turns his thoughts to his parents:

> Tristan beklagt die Geschehnisse jetzt nicht, weil sie ihm Schaden zugefügt haben - er nimmt seine Lage fortan als gegeben hin wie vordem den Schulzwang - , sondern denkt an den Kummer, den sie den daheim

> Zurückgebliebenen bereiten müssen und verwünscht
> die beiden Anlässe, die dazu führten (2592 ff.).
> Er selbst ist für den Augenblick gerettet, die
> 'Eltern' aber, in deren Lage er sich hineindenkt,
> müssen über der Ungewißheit seines Schicksals
> vor Angst vergehen, und dieses wiederum quält
> ihn selbst.[110]

It is indicative of the attitude of "rîcher muot" and of the selflessness which underlies that attitude that Tristan is more concerned and grief-stricken about the suffering of his parents than about the uncertainty and peril of his own situation.

The quality of "rîcher muot" is one of the principal characteristics of the young Tristan which makes him both welcome and beloved at Marke's court. From the moment that he helps the king's huntsmen to dissect the hart, he becomes "ein lieber hoveman under in" (3487) whose company is constantly sought by everyone. While it is true that he aids the hunters primarily for his own sake - he needs shelter and he can obtain it by gaining the men's favor - he nevertheless renders them a valuable service. Moreover, he behaves in a totally generous way once he is at Marke's court, willingly doing all that he can to enhance the lives of the king's subjects and using his extraordinary talents to promote the happiness and well-being of those at court:

> ouch was er also dienesthaft
> dem armen unde dem richen:
> möhter ir iegelichen
> uf siner hant getragen han,
> daz haete er gerne getan.
> die saelde haete im got gegeben,
> er kunde und wolte in allen leben:
> lachen, tanzen, singen,
> riten, loufen, springen,
> zuhten unde schallen.
> daz kunder mit in allen.
> er lebete, swie man wolte

und als diu jugent solte:
swes ir dekeiner began,
daz huober iemer mit im an. (3490ff.)

Tristan's treatment of Rual serves to further illustrate his generosity and nobility of spirit. Because Rual had acted in every respect like a loving father towards Tristan, providing him with an excellent education and searching for him after the abduction at great personal cost, Tristan reflects upon the best possible means of reciprocating his step-father's extraordinary goodness. He orders that a "hochzît" be celebrated, and in the presence of the nobles of the country he confers knighthood upon Rual's two sons. His generosity towards his step-brothers does not end at that point, however. In a formulation reminiscent of the language of Hartmann, Gottfried stresses Tristan's willingness to do all that he can on the young men's behalf:

und swaz er zuo dem male
zir wirde und zir eren
siner koste mohte keren,
da haete er spate unde vruo
als inneclichen willen zuo,
als ob si waeren siniu kint. (5732ff.)

In addition, Tristan makes Rual and the latter's descendants the heirs of his native lands. Tristan's generosity on this occasion calls to mind the dictum of Thomasin which states that the gift should be suited to the recipient. Tristan, in fact, could not have given Rual a more appropriate gift. The honor which he conferred on the sons brings honor to their father as well; and since Rual had so assiduously cared for Tristan's lands from the days of Riwalin, he, more than anyone else, deserves to be the heir. Tristan knows that his departure to Cornwall will grieve Rual; thus he seeks to assuage his friend's pain by means of loving generosity.

Although it is most evident before Tristan drinks the love potion that he possesses the attribute of "richer muot", we find indications that he never fully loses that quality, even after he is deprived of his free will with regard to the object of his love.[111] Hollandt calls attention to the way in which the list-motif plays an integral role in the characterization of Tristan; and it is noteworthy that whenever Tristan avails himself of list - both before and after the love potion episode - he does so not only to his own advantage but for the good of others as well. Because we are in full agreement with Hollandt's findings, and because they have significance for our topic, we will briefly summarize them here.

Hollandt assesses Gottfried's attitude towards list in the following manner: "Nach Gottfrieds Sittenkodex ist die List verwerflich, wenn sie den Schaden des anderen bezweckt; sie ist nicht nur zu billigen, sondern hoch zu loben, wenn sie in guter Absicht und zum Vorteil anderer geschieht."[112] She also observes that in using list, Tristan never deliberately sets out to hurt another person (except when he is provoked by a malevolent opponent), nor does he seek his own advantage solely for the sake of advantage. Instead, he always has the best of intentions towards others. To document her contention, Hollandt presents convincing evidence:

> Den beiden Pilgern bereitete er kurzewile (2757), den Jägern erteilte er eine willkommene weidmännische Lektion, Marke bereitete er eitel Freude, die List im Morgan-Kampf geschah zum Vorteil sowohl seiner Begleiter als auch seines ganzen Landes, die hilfreichen Iren belohnte er durch Harfenspiel und Gesang, der Königin diente er durch die Unterrichtung ihrer Tochter - sie

> hätte keinen besseren Lehrer finden können - , der irischen Hafenwache machte er reiche Geschenke. Und selbst die Minnelisten, die darauf abzielen, den König in Unwissenheit über sein Liebesverhältnis mit Isolde zu lassen, dienen zugleich Markes Bewahrung vor Kummer und Schande.[113]

The contrast between Tristan's various liste and those of other characters in the work is striking: If we consider the way in which the cowardly and self-seeking steward uses list to convince Isolde's family that he has killed the dragon and thus deserves the maiden as his wife, and if we recall the way in which the hate-filled Marjodo and the ignoble Melot plot to uncover the love relationship between Tristan and Isolde, then we realize all the more clearly that Tristan's use of list is a manifestation of nobility and generosity of spirit.[114]

2. Marke. Just as the potential to develop the attitude of "rîcher muot" was Parzival's hereditary endowment from his uncles Galoes and Trevrizent, so, too, is Tristan's nobility and generosity of spirit part of his inheritance from his uncle Marke. To prove this assertion is somewhat difficult, because Marke, more than any other figure in the epic, is the subject of heated controversy in secondary literature. Some scholars view Marke as the epitome of courtliness; they regard the poet's negative portrayal of the king in the latter part of the epic as a reflection of Gottfried's criticism of the courtly world itself. Others consider Marke to be a basically weak figure who is torn back and forth by doubts and by the bad counsel which he receives from his advisors.[115] Because of this controversy, only a careful analysis of the text can reveal the extent to which Marke possesses the trait of "rîcher muot".

At the beginning of the epic, Marke is portrayed in an unquestionably favorable light. It is Marke's widespread reputation for virtue and courtliness which prompts Riwalin to leave his country and to place himself in the king's service:

> kein künec so werder was als er.
> da hin was Riwalines ger.
> alda dahter beliben,
> ein jar mit ime vertriben
> und von im werden tugenthaft
> und lernen niuwan ritterschaft
> und ebenen sine site baz. (453ff.)

Upon arrival in Tintagel, Riwalin promptly discovers that Marke's reputation as the epitome of virtue was by no means exaggerated:

> swaz ich von Markes tugenden ie
> gehorte sagen, deist allez hie.
> sin leben daz ist höfsch unde guot. (499ff.)

Marke welcomes Riwalin warmly and places all that he has at his guest's disposal (506ff.). The honorable way in which he treats Riwalin, together with the heartfelt manner in which he mourns when his beloved friend is wounded (1155ff.), suggests that Marke is indeed noble and generous of spirit.

Fifteen years later, Tristan is the recipient of the same warm and loving treatment which Marke had accorded Riwalin. Even though the king is at first unaware that Tristan is his nephew, he is instinctively drawn to the young man. He therefore orders his subjects to treat Tristan well, and he and Tristan become constant companions. Moreover, he grants the youth an office at court (3394f.) - an unusual and most generous gesture towards one as young as Tristan. When Marke becomes aware of the full extent of Tristan's extraordinary abilities, he amply

rewards the boy for the joy which Tristan brings him:

> 'so kan ich spil, daz tuon ich dir,
> des ouch din herze lihte gert:
> schoeniu cleider unde pfert,
> der gibe ich dir swie vil du wilt:
> da mite han ich dir wol gespilt.' (3732ff.)

His generosity increases when he learns that Tristan is his nephew. He places his land, his people and all his possessions at Tristan's disposal (4455ff.).

We expect, of course, that Marke would be generous to Tristan upon discovering that the youth is his "Schwestersohn". It is noteworthy, however, that his generosity is inspired not only by the close ties of kinship which exist between them but also - and in fact primarily - by his awareness of Tristan's inner nobility. Marke clearly states that he has observed Tristan's innate tendency towards honorable conduct (4463ff.). Because Marke himself is noble of spirit, he values that same quality in his nephew just as he had once valued it in Riwalin. Thus he decides to provide Tristan with the necessary material goods which will enable the young man to display "rîcher muot":

> 'wiltu zer werlde gewerdet sin,
> so schaffe et umbe richen muot;
> ich gibe dir rilichez guot.
> sich, du hast keiserliche habe,
> nu ganc dir selber nihtes abe,
> bistu dir selbem also holt
> und hastu muot, als du solt
> unde als du mir hast verjehen,
> daz han ich schiere an dir gesehen.
> sich, vinde ich herren muot an dir,
> du vindest iemer mere an mir
> dines willen vollen schrin:
> Tintajel muoz iemer sin
> din triskamere und din trisor.
> gesprengestu mir rehte vor
> mit rilichem muot

volg ich dir niht mit guote,
so muoz mir allez daz zegan,
daz ich ze Curnewale han.' (4470ff.)

The significance of Marke's words can scarcely be overemphasized. The attitude of "rîcher muot" occupies a high position in his hierarchy of values, and wealth is important only inasmuch as it enables the individual to foster that attitude. Mark is saying, in effect, "At all times manifest the spirit of 'rîcher muot', because nothing takes precedence over that spirit; and I, in turn, will do all that I can to help you in that endeavor."

We find further evidence of Marke's nobility and generosity of spirit when Tristan announces his intention to return for a time to Parmenie. Marke's response to his nephew's announcement calls to mind the reaction of Galoes when he learned that Gahmuret was about to leave him. Although Marke is saddened by the news, he willingly provides Tristan with all that the young man needs and wants for the journey (5126ff.). In addition, Marke reiterates his earlier promise to share all that is his with Tristan, and he declares that he will forever remain unmarried so that Tristan may inherit his crown. The way in which he phrases his promise indicates that love for his nephew is the prime motivating force behind his decision: "'wan ich will durch den willen din/ eliches wibes ane sin.'" (5159f.; our underlining). Because Marke is king, he is obliged to provide an heir to the throne, and marriage is the customary way to meet that obligation. For the sake of Tristan, however, Marke chooses to remain single.

Marke happily envisions the continuation of a life of mutual love

and good will between him and his nephew:

> 'bistu mir holt, als ich dir bin,
> treistu mir herze, als ich dir trage,
> weiz got so sul wir unser tage
> vroliche mit ein ander leben.' (5164ff.)

That life is, in fact, resumed when Tristan returns to his uncle. It is characteristic of their relationship that when Tristan assumes the task of challenging Morolt in order to rid his uncle's kingdom of the disgrace which has befallen it, Marke is overwhelmed by grief at the thought of losing his beloved nephew and does all that he can to dissuade Tristan from undertaking the perilous confrontation (6242ff.; 6521ff.). Each displays the attitude of "rîcher muot" in that each considers the good of the other as his first priority.

Marke continues to be depicted as generous and noble of spirit in his dealings with Tristan until the hate-filled Marjodo, prompted by ignoble motives, awakens the king's suspicions about the existence of a love relationship between Tristan and Isolde. Thereafter "der zwivel unde der arcwan" (13753) become the predominant forces in his life, and we find little further evidence that he possesses the attribute of "rîcher muot". He divides his time between trying on the one hand to convince himself of the impossibility of Marjodo's allegation and seeking on the other to uncover evidence which would substantiate the claim. It must be stressed, however, that Marke's preoccupation with Marjodo's charge is understandable, since an illicit relationship between Tristan and the queen would bring dishonor not only to him but also to his kingdom. Moreover, Marjodo more than Marke is the object of Gottfried's disfavor, because he raised the allegation out of hatred,

rage and envy rather than out of concern for the honor of the king. It would seem, then, that "rîcher muot" is indeed a characteristic of Marke, but that the malevolence of one of his subjects forces him to direct his attention in another direction.

We referred above to the partially negative portrayal of Marke which has been the subject of frequent discussion in secondary literature. If we consider the passages in which Marke appears in an unfavorable light, we find that almost without exception they center around his relationship to Isolde:

> Der Eindruck negativer Beurteilung Markes durch den Dichter stellt sich erst ein, wenn man dessen Verhalten mit dem Tristans auf der Seefahrt und späterhin vergleicht, und das hat Gottfried zweifellos auch beabsichtigt. Der Wesensunterschied zwischen Marke und Tristan tritt nun, da es sich um die Minne handelt, scharf heraus: er gewinnt thematische Bedeutung.[116]

That one woman is the same as any other for Marke ("in duhte wip alse wip", 12666), that he allows Isolde to be carried off by Gandin without attempting to rescue her, and that "geluste unde gelange" characterize his approach to her after the "Minnegrotte" episode (17767; 17792ff.) - these are problems of minne rather than milte. Although both Tristan and Marke possess the virtue of "rîcher muot" to an equal degree, the king does not love Isolde to the same degree that Tristan does; therein lies the qualitative difference between them.

3. Rual and Floraete. While Gottfried's portrayal of Marke has engendered controversy among literary scholars, the poet's depiction of Rual and Floraete is totally unambiguous. Both are the epitome of

nobility and generosity of spirit. Triuwe is the epithet which most frequently appears in conjunction with Rual's name, and it is this aspect of his character which is most frequently discussed in secondary literature. Rual is, of course, the embodiment of triuwe, but the attitude of "rîcher muot" is also implicit in all his actions. That he possesses this attribute is first seen when Tristan becomes an orphan at birth. Rual announces that the infant has died in his mother's womb, and he carefully hides Tristan until such a time as he can claim with credibility that his wife has borne him a child. In this way he saves Tristan from probable harm by Morgan's hand, and the infant becomes the son of Rual and Floraete in the deepest sense of the word.

Gottfried describes at length the extraordinary devotion of the adoptive parents for their new son. Floraete makes no distinction between Tristan and her own natural children:

> si leite ouch allen ir sin
> mit muoterlicher liebe an in
> und was des also staete,
> als ob sin selbe ie haete
> under ir brüsten getragen. (1941ff.)

Paramount in her thoughts is the comfort and well-being of her child:

> si wolte wizzen alle wege
> und sehen, ob ime sin sache
> stüende ze gemache.
> sin süeziu muoter leite an in
> mit also süezen vlize ir sin,
> daz sime des niht engunde,
> daz er ze keiner stunde
> unsanfte nider getraete. (2048ff.)

The fact that she is as loving and generous to Tristan as she is to her natural sons earns her the poet's highest accolades: She is "diu guote, diu staete", "diu reine", "diu wibes ere ein spiegelglas", and "rehter

güete ein gimme" (1905ff.). Her concern for Tristan is exceeded only by that of Rual, who is even more devoted to Tristan than he is to his own sons: "siner eigenen kinde/ was er so vlizec niht so sin." (2186f.) Because Tristan is, in fact, their liege lord, the couple is obliged to care for him. But it is vividly apparent from Gottfried's description of their attitude and conduct that they go far beyond the bounds of mere justice in meeting their obligation. They act not "von reht" but "nâch rehte", i.e., according to the dictates of milte.

The extraordinary devotion of Rual for his adoptive son becomes most apparent after Tristan is kidnapped. The boy's disappearance is the cause of heart-rending sorrow to the couple:

> Der marschalc und sin saelic wip
> diu beidiu leiten an ir lip
> so jaemerliche clagenot,
> und waerer vor ir ougen tot,
> daz in diu selbe swaere
> niht naher gangen waere. (2375ff.)

Despite their grief, however, Rual sets out without delay to recover his son, firmly resolved never to return without him. He goes first to Norway, then to Ireland, without success. By the time he reaches Ireland, his resources become depleted to the extent that he is forced to sell his horses and send his companions home. Totally destitute, he is reduced to begging for his sustenance, and he wanders in that fashion for more than three years. His beauty fades. His color deteriorates. Those who see him find no outward sign that he is of noble birth. Significantly, however, there is a direct inverse correlation between his outer and inner state. The more trying his circumstances become, the more his magnanimity of spirit shines forth:

die schamelichen bürde
die truoc der werde dan Rualt
geliche alsam ein artribalt,
daz ime dekein sin armuot
als ez doch weizgot manegem tuot,
sinen guoten willen nie benam. (3794ff.)

Never for a moment does Rual think about his own sorry plight; his only thought is Tristan.

When, in the fourth year of his wanderings, Rual learns that Tristan is most probably in Tintagel, he hastens to the sea, never resting even as much as half a day. Because no ship is ready to sail, he is finally compelled to rest - and his own comfort greatly annoys him, for it delays his anticipated reunion with Tristan (3860ff.). He arrives in Britain, plods forward both day and night to Cornwall, and at last reaches Tintagel, where he is reunited with his son. As soon as he receives suitable attire, he appears in the presence of Marke's people, who have been led to believe by Tristan that the latter's father is a merchant. Those who behold Rual quickly detect the discrepancy between his alleged station in life and his noble bearing and appearance. The conclusion which they draw most aptly describes Rual:

'nu seht, wie herliche er gat,
wie schoene gebaerde er hat
in edelem gewande,
und niuwan an Tristande
da kieset sine tugende an:
wie kunde ein werbender man
sin kint so schone erzogen han,
ezn mueze uz edelem herzen gan?' (4087ff.)

In this context "uz edelem herzen" is synonymous with "uz rîchem muot". Rual left behind his beloved family, searched for years for Tristan, suffered physical and emotional privations (it must be remembered that

for four years he had no news of his family), and willingly endured the humiliations of a beggar's life - all this out of love for Tristan. He is without doubt the most positive and honorable character in the epic, and he ranks with such figures as Ruedeger of Bechlarn in the Nibelungenlied as one of the purest representatives of the virtue of milte in all of medieval German literature.

4. The noblemen. From the point of view of milte, the contrast between the generous and noble Rual and the noblemen of Ireland and England is one of the most striking aspects of Gottfried's epic. We are introduced to the Irish nobility when Morolt, the representative of the formidable King Gurman, arrives in England to collect the annual tribute which Marke owes him. Marke had become subject to tribute in his youth, i.e., at a time when he was unable to resist the force of Gurman, who had swept over the face of the continent, subduing all who were less powerful than he by means of "Faustrecht". In the first year of tribute Morolt had demanded 300 marks of bronze; in the second, silver; in the third, gold. That the demand for ever more valuable tribute is symptomatic of greed becomes apparent now in the fourth year, when Morolt requires that thirty of the most handsome sons of Marke's noblemen be handed over to him for "service" in Ireland.

The inhumanity of the demand prompts the poet to describe Morolt as "unerbermig" and "arc" (5974), but the response of Marke's subjects to the demand is equally infamous: "barune und ir genoze" draw lots to determine which children shall be the victims (5955ff.). While Rual was willing to make any sacrifice on behalf of his adopted son,

thereby demonstrating his honor, Marke's dishonorable nobles are ready to surrender their own flesh and blood to a life of bondage rather than risk their lives in combat against Morolt:

> die edelen lantgenoze
> die giengen da ze loze
> ir kinden zeinem valle. (6035ff.)

One is compelled to conclude that Gottfried uses the word "edelen" at this juncture to convey a sense of bitter irony. The attitude of the ignoble noblemen brings dishonor upon them and upon the realm, as Tristan's reproach reveals:

> 'ir herren' sprach er 'alle samet,
> alle mit einem namen genamet,
> die hie ze loze loufent,
> ir edelkeit verkoufent,
> schamt ir iuch der schanden niht,
> diu disem lande an iu geschiht?' (6063ff.; see also 6139ff.)

Only Tristan is willing to confront Morolt for the sake of the children. His readiness to jeopardize his own safety on behalf of others is a manifestation of the attitude of "rîcher muot" - an attitude which stands in direct contrast to the cowardice of the nobles, whose foremost concern is their own well-being. Because Tristan risks his life on behalf of the nobles and their children, because he is wounded in the process[117] and because he must once again place himself in mortal peril by going to Ireland to seek a cure, we expect that he should enjoy the lasting gratitude and good will of the noblemen. Quite the opposite is, in fact, the case.

When Tristan returns from Ireland, fully cured of his affliction, he is at first well-received by the barons. Soon, however, he becomes

the object of their hatred and envy because of the honor which is given him throughout the realm (8320ff.; 8365f.; 8393). The beneficiaries of Tristan's courageous and noble actions then attempt to persuade Marke to marry so that his nephew will be disinherited. Their hatred mounts to the extent that Tristan fears for his life; his fears are indeed justified, for Gottfried explicitly states that their aim is Tristan's demise (8452f.). It is the hatred, envy and ingratitude of the barons - emotions wholly antithetical to the spirit of "rîcher muot" - which sets the stage for future disaster. Because Tristan knows that he is in mortal danger, he persuades Marke to allow him to go to Ireland so that he may attempt to win Isolde for the king. Marke's acquiescence to the will of the barons is the first of a chain of events which leads directly to the "Minnetrank" episode with all its dire consequences.

Just as the hatred and envy of the nobles paves the way for future ills, so does the hatred and envy of Marjodo lead to the destruction of the bond of love and friendship which unites Tristan and Marke. Significantly, Marjodo is "ein edeler barun,/ des küneges lantsaeze" (13462 ff.). Moreover, he is the friend and companion of Tristan and an admirer of Isolde until his love for the two turns to "haz unde leit" (13603) when he discovers the illicit relationship between them. We noted above that Marjodo is prompted to reveal the existence of the relationship to Marke solely by hatred and envy rather than by concern for the honor of the king. Having planted the seeds of doubt and suspicion in Marke's mind (after which the harmonious relationship between uncle and nephew is never again the same), Marjodo incessantly plots with the contemptible

Melot to provide the king with concrete evidence of his allegation. Both men receive the most negative epithets from the author: Melot is described as a "slange" and Marjodo as a "hund" (15100). Gottfried regards them as particularly despicable because of their valscheit. While feigning friendship for Tristan, they scheme to effect his downfall (15047ff.).

5. Summary. In our introduction to Tristan, we noted that the way in which Gottfried uses the terms "edel", "edelez herze" and "edeler muot" strongly suggests that he associates nobility and "höveschеit" above all with the inner dignity and worth of the individual. We also noted that the treatment of milte in the epic serves to corroborate that association. The characters who are most clearly noble - Tristan, Marke, Rual and Floraete - are those who display the attitude of "rîcher muot". Each places the desires and well-being of others ahead of his own wishes, and, in the case of Tristan and Rual, ahead of personal safety and welfare. Conversely, the figures who are most notably subjected to the poet's scorn - the noblemen of Ireland and England - are noble in name only, for their actions are motivated at all times by hatred, envy or selfishness rather than by the spirit of "rîcher muot". Thus we see that Gottfried, like Hartmann and Wolfram before him, sees a direct correlation between êre and milte.

Both milte as "rîcher muot" and the absence of that virtue at critical junctures in the epic have a direct and dramatic impact on the events in Tristan. Rual's willingness to search for Tristan leads him to Tintagel, where he reveals Tristan's true identity to Marke, thereby

laying the foundation for a deepening of the mutual love which already exists between uncle and nephew. Similarly, Tristan's willingness to challenge Morolt removes the disgrace brought upon the realm by the cowardice of its barons. The barons' lack of "rîcher muot", on the other hand, prompts them to insist that Marke marry, and their malevolence gives rise to the first of several events which leads to the union of Tristan and Isolde, along with the catastrophic results engendered by that union. On the basis of the evidence found in the text, we can conclude that although the concept of milte as "rîcher muot" occurs for the most part implicitly rather than explicitly in the work, its presence in the epic as well as its impact on the action are clearly undeniable.

E. Conclusions

In the preceding chapter we made several observations about the meaning of the concept of milte as it appeared in the literature of the precourtly and early courtly period. First of all, we observed that the three basic connotations of milte in early Germanic languages and literatures - loving and caring concern for one's subjects or one's fellow man, mercy or compassion, and generosity - did not change significantly in the works which preceded the great epics of the late twelfth and early thirteenth century. Secondly, whenever the word milte occurred, its meaning was taken for granted; we found no attempts to define the concept, nor did we encounter digressions about its importance. Finally, the word milte was often used solely for the sake of providing a convenient rhyme. The four masterpieces of Arthurian romance which we

considered in this chapter presented us with a substantially different picture of the meaning of milte.

As the authors of the courtly period began to re-examine and redefine the meaning of "höveschеit", they scrutinized other key concepts of medieval thought as well. Just as it was no longer sufficient for the individual to belong to the court of a prince in order to be considered "hövesch", it was also no longer adequate to lavishly bestow gifts in order to receive the epithet milte. The truly courtly individual had to possess certain inner qualities such as zuht, mâze and triuwe; similarly, the truly liberal man had to possess the desire, will or predisposition to act nobly and generously. It was this inner attitude which constituted the basic definition of milte for the authors of the great Arthurian romances - an attitude explicitly defined by Thomasin in the following decade and found both implicitly and explicitly in the four Arthurian works with which we have dealt:

> Diu milte ist ein tugente guot
> und hât ir wurze in rîchem muot.
> nu sage waz milte müge sîn?
> si ist des rîchen muotes schîn.
> daz geben heizet milte niht,
> doch wizzet daz ez geschiht
> von der milte, der gerne gît. (Thomasin, 13951ff.)

Although the word milte continued to be used with its three original connotations, and although it continued to appear in its traditional context as a desirable or necessary attribute of a lord and as an integral part of courtly festivities, the association of milte with "rîcher muot" was of far greater interest and importance to the authors of the courtly epic than the merely conventional meanings of the word. Because

the authors had begun to regard the concept of milte with ever greater consciousness, they, unlike their predecessors, elaborated on its meaning and implications. Moreover, they only rarely used the word milte solely for the sake of rhyme; it had become too significant a concept to be used with frequency in such a way.

The new definition of milte as "rîcher muot" had a number of significant implications. In the first place, because milte came to be regarded primarily as an attitude or predisposition rather than as a concrete action, it followed logically that even the impoverished individual could be considered milte. The poor but noble Koralus had few tangible goods and comforts to offer Erec, but "der reine wille" provided his guest with all and more than he required. The hermit Trevrizent had only herbs and roots to offer Parzival and a humble dwelling in which to shelter his nephew; and yet, his nobility and generosity of spirit created an atmosphere in which Parzival enjoyed a greater sense of well-being than he had felt in Munsalvaesche.

Secondly, the distinction between milte and reht became increasingly apparent. In our discussion of Erec, we noted that on a number of occasions the title hero was obliged to offer payment for services rendered to him. He invariably did so by giving "nâch rehte" as opposed to "von reht", i.e., by willingly giving even more than what he was legally and justly bound to give. Such generosity served not only to depict him as milte but also to illustrate his inner honor. In a similar manner, Gawan's willing intervention in the conflict engendered by the problems of Obie and Meljanz - a conflict for which he bore no legal responsibility -

and Rual's lengthy and arduous search for Tristan which far exceeded his legal obligation to Tristan as his liege lord also serve as examples of the way in which giving "nâch rehte" surpasses justice and ennobles the individual.

A third implication of the new definition of milte which stressed "wille" and "muot" even more than concrete action was the occurrence of formulations such as "milte âne riuwe". In precourtly and early courtly literature it was generally sufficient to bestow goods if one wished to be regarded as milte. In Arthurian romance, on the other hand, we encounter the conviction that giving reluctantly or giving and then regretting one's generosity does not constitute true liberality. Only the individual who gives willingly and never regrets having been generous can be considered milte in the true sense of the word.

In our discussion of the function of milte in precourtly and early courtly literature, we noted that in the earliest works of that era such as the Vorauer Alexander, milte played a very insignificant role. We also saw, however, that the more closely we approached the thirteenth century, the more frequently the word appeared and the more important its role became. The significance of the role of milte in character depiction and plot continued to increase in the works of Arthurian romance. We have only to recall that the attribute of "rîcher muot" was a necessary precondition for the fulfillment of the mission to which Parzival was called, and that Gawan was worthy of the role of redeemer of the Arthurian realm in part because he possessed that attribute to a very high degree. Similarly, Iwein's lack of triuwe and erbärmde

in the slaying of Ascalôn - a crime perpetrated so that he might gain the honor and recognition of the Arthurian court - constituted a violation of every law of mercy and compassion; it was this problem which stood at the core of the epic. As we move into the thirteenth century, milte becomes an increasingly important concept, and it therefore assumes a greater function in the works of courtly authors.

Finally, we noted in the preceding chapter that the antithesis of milte, the vice of greed, played a significant role only in the Rolandslied and in the Eneide. As in the case of milte, we found no attempt on the part of precourtly and early courtly authors to elaborate on the nature of greed and on its negative consequences, nor did we encounter a conscious juxtaposition of milte and erge for the sake of contrast. The authors of Arthurian romance, on the other hand, took a more pronounced stand against greed, and they gave it a more substantial role in their works than did their predecessors. This is particularly true of Wolfram and Gottfried. The characters whom Wolfram viewed with the greatest disdain were the avaricious fisherman and Liddamus; in addition, Keye's envy of Gawan's good fortune provoked the author to digress at length about the attitude of the "muotes kranken" who were "gîtes unde hazzes vol". The ignoble barons of Gottfried's epic were also the principal object of the poet's scorn; moreover, it was their hatred, envy and greed which set the stage for impending disaster in the work.

We asserted earlier that the new definition of milte as "rîcher muot" was shared by many authors of the courtly period. In order to further test the truth of that assertion, we must consider the meaning

and function of milte in the heroic epics of the courtly period and in representative works of didactic literature. In the following chapter we will turn our attention to the concept of milte as it appears in the two great heroic epics of the era: the Nibelungenlied and the Kudrun. Because these works were written during the courtly period and because they contain decidedly courtly elements despite their concern with "alten maeren", we expect that the concept of milte will be defined in them in much the same way that it was defined in Arthurian romance, and that it will play a substantial role in character depiction and plot. The following chapter will serve to determine whether those expectations are correct.

CHAPTER IV

MILTE IN THE HEROIC EPIC

In the conclusion of the preceding chapter we noted that both the Nibelungenlied and the Kudrun are rightfully regarded as works of courtly literature, even though both are concerned with "alten maeren" and even though the heroes and heroines of both were known to their contemporary audience from earlier epic narratives. Much of twentieth century literary scholarship reveals an awareness of the courtly aspects of the Nibelungenlied, but the degree to which the author of the Kudrun succeeded in transforming his "Stoff" into a work which may be classified as a "höfischer Heldenroman" has been the subject of scholarly debate. We share the view of those scholars who believe that both works clearly reflect the values and ideals of the courtly period during which they were written and that both merit classification as courtly heroic epics, despite some evidence of an older, non-courtly system of values which is also found in both.[1]

Helmut DeBoor is the best-known critic calling attention to the courtly features of the Nibelungenlied. In his Geschichte der deutschen Literatur, DeBoor begins his discussion of the epic by placing it "unter den höfischen Heldenromanen".[2] He then goes on to reiterate his position and to expand upon it:

> Das Nibelungenlied ist ein höfischer Heldenroman; höfisch-ritterliches Verhalten, Zucht und Maße, adlige Schönheit und Pracht der Erscheinung beherrschen das ganze Gedicht. Als Geste und Haltung durchdringt es die altheroischen Kernszenen, bestimmt das Wesen der jüngeren Figuren und Geschehnisse, am greifbarsten in der Neuformung von

> Siegfrieds Werbung um Kriemhild zum kleinen Minneroman.[3]

DeBoor's observations prompted Nelly Dürrenmatt to undertake a careful study of the courtly aspects of the Nibelungenlied. After detailed examination of character depiction and of the author's treatment of the external conventions of "höveschеit" as seen in situations such as "Empfangsfeierlichkeiten", "Bewirtung", "Beschenkung", "das höfische Fest", etc., Dürrenmatt reached the following conclusion:

> Es zeigte sich uns, daß der Nibelungendichter dort, wo er höfisch sein kann und höfisch sein will, die höfischen Forderungen erfüllt. Stark ausgeprägt ist sein höfisches Formgefühl. Er verlangt ganz im Geist der höfisch-ritterlichen Kultur die sinnlich-sichtbaren Gebärden als Ausdruck der inneren Haltung.[4]

Dürrenmatt appropriately observes that the externals of courtly convention are meant to be reflections of an inner attitude of courtliness. Although the characters of the epic are from a distant, non-courtly past, they are clothed in contemporary garb, and they are judged by the poet and his audience according to the way in which they observe the spirit rather than only the letter of the law of "höveschеit". Dürrenmatt goes on to note:

> Wenn wir auch die Grundhaltung des Nibelungenliedes als sehr viel höfischer ansehen, als dies die Forschung bisher zugegeben hat, so behaupten wir natürlich nicht, die Helden des Nibelungenliedes verkörperten wirklich voll und ganz das höfische Ideal. Der Grundbegriff der höfischen Ethik, die "mâze", ist für sie nicht der höchste und letzte Wert. Siegfrieds und Gunthers Verhalten zu Brünhild ist des höfischen Ritters nicht würdig; Brünhild ist in ihren Kraftleistungen nicht die höfische Dame.[5]

It is precisely the failure of the major figures in the epic to act according to the spirit of courtliness which brings about the tragic ending of the work. The poet's depiction of the discrepancy between the characters' conformity to the external conventions of courtliness and the absence of the spirit which must underlie those conventions reveals the importance which he ascribes to the concept of "höveschеit".

Although DeBoor was one of the earliest scholars to take note of the courtly aspects of the Nibelungenlied, he failed to detect the spirit of courtliness which permeates the Kudrun. DeBoor observes that the author of the Kudrun shared the goal of his model, the poet of the Nibelungenlied: "die innere Umformung eines außerhöfischen Stoffes in höfischem Geist"; but he implies that the Kudrun poet failed to achieve that goal, because in his estimation the work lacks the special quality of the Nibelungenlied, which he describes as "die Begegnung zweier adliger Welten von höchsten Ansprüchen an den vorbildlichen Menschen: der heroischen und der höfischen."[6] DeBoor maintains that virtually none of the masculine figures in the work is depicted as a real personality, and that even Hartmut, the most courtly knight in the epic, "wirkt in seiner zuchtvollen Mäßigung und weichen Empfindsamkeit mehr durch den Kontrast zu seiner Mutter als durch die eigene Persönlichkeit."[7] DeBoor fails to observe that the portrayal of Hartmut as a truly courtly individual, despite his obvious failings, is one of many factors which lends courtly stature to the work. For him, the poet's great achievement is not the mastery of his "Stoff" and its transformation into a courtly heroic epic but instead the ability to use detail in such a way as to depict

the suffering of the heroine in a vivid and striking manner.[8]

DeBoor's assessment of the courtly aspects of the work is shared to some extent by Karl Stackmann. In his introduction to the text of the Kudrun, Stackmann states that the work is most clearly related to the "Spielmannsdichtung".[9] He further notes that although the epic has a number of features which are typical of heroic poetry, it is only loosely connected with the heroic genre.[10] Like DeBoor, Stackmann mentions the "erhebliche Unterschiede" which exist between the Kudrun and the courtly epic; but he, in direct contrast to DeBoor, maintains that the author of the Kudrun is more successful in effecting a courtly transformation of his "Stoff" than is the author of the Nibelungenlied; whereas the latter work ends tragically, the former ends happily. On the basis of the happy ending, Stackmann concludes: "So darf man wohl annehmen, nach seiner eigenen Vorstellung habe er [the Kudrun poet] mit der 'Kudrun' ein Seitenstück zu den höfischen Romanen seiner Zeit geschaffen."[11] Although Stackmann is correct in stressing the relationship of the Kudrun to the courtly epic, it would, we believe, be more accurate to conclude that the Nibelungenlied ends on a tragic note because of the absence of the spirit of "höveschеit" as a motivating force on significant occasions, while the Kudrun ends happily because of the ultimate predominance of the spirit of love, forgiveness and reconciliation which lies at the very core of "höveschеit". To underestimate the courtly aspects of either work is to view the work from a somewhat distorted perspective.

The treatment of both works as courtly heroic epics has important implications for the topic of milte. Just as the attitude and conduct

of many of the major figures in the Nibelungenlied reflects an observance of the form rather than the spirit of courtliness, so, too, does their attitude and conduct reveal an observance of the form but not the spirit of milte. Conversely, at crucial junctures in the Kudrun, we find the observance of both the outward form and the inner spirit of courtliness and milte. Therefore, in addition to discussing the meaning and function of milte, we also intend to consider the correlation between courtliness and milte in both epics.

Before turning to a discussion of the Nibelungenlied and the Kudrun we must note that we have chosen to consider these works not only because they are the most outstanding representatives of their genre but also because the time span which separates them is particularly advantageous for our consideration of milte. Although it is not known with absolute certainty when the works were written, the Nibelungenlied is believed to have originated shortly after 1200, and the Kudrun is presumed to have been written no earlier than 1231 or 1232.[12] Assuming that these dates are approximately correct and that twenty-five to thirty years separate the works, we will be able to determine whether or not the meaning and function of milte undergo any significant changes as we move away from the first decade of the thirteenth century.

A. The Nibelungenlied

A careful reading of the Nibelungenlied reveals that the word milte occurs in the work with far greater frequency than it does in the Arthurian epics with which we dealt in the preceding chapter. The word itself

is often used explicitly as an attribute of the major characters in the epic, including women as well as men, and the traditional concept of milte is also implicit in numerous scenes which depict the giving of goods as gifts. Moreover, milte plays a larger role in the various "hochzîten" in the epic than it does in the Arthurian romances which we have considered. In his description of Siegfried's "Schwertleite", for example, the author repeatedly mentions the generosity which abounds at the celebration. Twenty-five per cent of the lines dedicated to the description of the festivities center around milte, and the passage concludes with a reiteration of the boundless giving which crowns the occasion:

> Vil lîtzel man der varnder ármén da vant.
> róss únde kleider daz stoub in von der hant,
> sam si ze lebene hêten niht mêr deheinen tac.
> ich waen' ie ingesinde sô grôzer milte gepflac.[13]

Unlimited generosity is also displayed at the marriage of Gunther and Brunhild, on the occasion of Siegfried's return to his kingdom after his marriage, and at the wedding of Etzel and Kriemhild. In each of these events milte plays a prominent role and together with the profuse description of clothing lends color to the festivities.[14]

The frequent occurrence of milte in the Nibelungenlied as well as its usage as a convenient rhyme word on only one occasion (1746, 1) might at first lead one to conclude that its presence in the work is indicative of the importance which the author attributes to that concept. However, as we indicated above, it is precisely the absence of the true spirit of milte on decisive occasions which reveals the important position that this virtue holds in the poet's hierarchy of values. Although most of

the principal characters in the epic act according to the external conventions of milte, they lack the spirit of "rîcher muot". This is particularly true of the figures who have the greatest impact on the major events of the work: Gunther, Siegfried, Brunhild and above all Kriemhild. On the other hand, the characters who observe both the form and the spirit of milte - Sigmunt, Etzel and Ruedeger - play a comparatively minor role in the shaping of the plot. It can also be demonstrated that the figures who lack the attribute of "rîcher muot" also lack a deep understanding of the true meaning of "höveschеit"; conversely, those who possess the attitude of "rîcher muot" are the most outstanding representatives of genuine courtliness.

1. Gunther. When we are introduced to Gunther at the beginning of the epic, we are immediately told that milte is an attribute shared by him and his brothers Gernot and Giselher: "Die herren wâren milte, von arde hôh erborn" (5, 1). Furthermore, on at least three occasions we find evidence which would seem to indicate that Gunther does, in fact, merit the epithet milte. At the celebration of his marriage to Brunhild he distributes gifts without limits (689). Later in the epic, his generosity is evident at the festivities in honor of the return of Siegfried and Kriemhild to his realm (801). Together with his brothers he is also exceedingly magnanimous towards the messengers of Kriemhild who invite the Burgundians to a "hochzît" in Etzel's realm (1488-90).[15] But if we carefully consider the occurrence of milte in each of these passages, it becomes clear that we are dealing with the merely conventional meaning and usage of the word as opposed to the spirit of "rîcher muot".

The epithet milte is traditionally ascribed to rulers and members of the aristocracy; furthermore, it belongs to the conventions of courtliness that a ruler distribute gifts to his guests on festive occasions and that he reward messengers who bring him welcome news. Although we find indications that Gunther is indeed milte in the traditional sense of the word, we encounter little evidence that he possesses the attribute of "rîcher muot".

Perhaps the earliest indication that Gunther lacks the predisposition to act nobly and generously is found in his attitude towards Brunhild. Upon hearing reports of her beauty, Gunther decides that he will attempt to win her as his bride. The way in which he phrases his decision already hints at a self-seeking attitude, for the accent is clearly on his wishes and his intentions:

> Dô sprach der vogt von Rîne: "ich wil nider an den sê
> hin ze Prünhilde, swi ez mir ergê.
> ich wil durch ir minne wâgen mînen lîp:
> den wil ich verliesen, sine wérdé mîn wîp."
> (329; our underlining)

Having been made aware of the dangers involved in such an undertaking, Gunther enlists the aid of Siegfried by promising him the hand of Kriemhild in marriage in exchange for services rendered. It soon becomes apparent that the method which Siegfried employs to help him is of absolutely no concern to the king.

Because Brunhild is an extraordinarily powerful woman, she has decided that only the man who is able to defeat her in three contests of strength will become her husband. All suitors who challenge her without success are summarily put to death. However unfeminine her de-

mands might appear and however harsh and symptomatic of arrogance the penalty for defeat might be, Brunhild is rightfully entitled to use the contests as a means of finding a partner who will truly be her equal. As soon as it becomes obvious that Gunther is incapable of meeting her challenge, Siegfried dons the "Tarnkappe" and defeats her in Gunther's stead. It does not matter to Gunther that he and Siegfried have used trickery and deception to win Brunhild, nor does he care that their conduct is a violation of Brunhild's basic human rights and of the most fundamental laws of minne and courtliness as well. That the love of a woman is to be won by service rather than by force is far from his mind. He has what he wants. He is content.

Gunther's treatment of Siegfried is equally indicative of a lack of "rîcher muot". The author clearly states that Gunther would have met with death in Island, had it not been for Siegfried's intervention on his behalf: "Und waere im Sîfrit niht ze helfe komen,/ sô hete si dem künege sînen lîp benomen." (452, lf.) And yet, having returned safely to Worms with Brunhild at his side, Gunther is at first so absorbed by his own happiness that he is oblivious of his earlier promise to give Siegfried his sister as wife. As Gottfried Weber notes:

> In Worms versäumt Gunther, sein Versprechen gegenüber dem Freunde, dem er nicht nur die Geliebte, sondern nichts Geringeres als sein Leben verdankt (465), nunmehr spontan einzulösen; er muß sich erst höchst ernsthaft mahnen lassen 'war sint die eide komen?' (608,3). Freilich wollte der König seinen Eid keineswegs brechen, aber in seiner Sinnenbegier denkt er nur an sich selbst (625 ff.) . . . . [16]

Gunther's preoccupation with himself on this occasion despite his

indebtedness to Siegfried is clearly antithetical to the spirit of "rîcher muot".

When Gunther is unable to subdue Brunhild on their wedding night, he must once again resort to Siegfried's help and to deception as a means of attaining his goal. It is solely because of Siegfried that Gunther's desire to possess Brunhild is finally fulfilled; thus we expect that Siegfried will be the recipient of the king's eternal gratitude and favor. After the quarrel between the queens, however, when Kriemhild produces the trophies of ring and belt which Siegfried had taken from Brunhild after subduing her, the bond of mutual friendship and loyalty which unites the two men is quickly severed. To be sure, Gunther at first behaves honorably towards his friend. Because he is conscious of his own role in the deception of Brunhild on the wedding night, he releases Siegfried from swearing an oath of innocence (860). Moreover, he initially opposes Hagen's insistence that Siegfried be put to death because of the dishonor which has befallen the realm as a result of the quarrel (868). But even as he defends Siegfried ("'lât belîben den mortlîchen zorn./ er ist uns ze saelden unt ze êren geborn.'", 872, 1f.) he begins to express less noble motives for preserving the life of his friend ("'ouch ist sô grimme stark der wundernküene man./ ob er sîn innen wurde, sô torste in niemen bestân.'", 872, 3f.); and in the face of Hagen's persistent demands that Siegfried be put to death, he begins to inquire about the details of Hagen's treacherous plan: "'wie möhte daz ergân?'" (874, 1).

One might at first be inclined to argue that Gunther is merely a weak figure who is misled by the influence of the more powerful Hagen;

but as Weber so accurately states, the text clearly disproves such an assertion:

> Was folgt, sieht den König zunehmend unter dem zwingenden Einfluß des Tronjers, der nicht von seiner Seite weicht (882). Trotzdem bleibt das Ausmaß der ethischen Wirrnis in dem König überraschend: es ist mehr als nur Schwäche, mehr als von außen herangetragene Getriebenheit. Gunther wird bei den Mordvorbereitungen selber aktiv (884; 887), und was er an Falschheit und Heuchelkunst zuwege bringt, ist grausig (vgl. 887; 910ff.; 914; 966); von ihm gilt gleichermaßen, was der Dichter von Hagen sagt: suz grozer untriuwe solde nimmer man gepflegen (915,4). Als die Untat vollzogen, klagt der König bewegt (992,1), aber der Sterbende weiß, daß hinter Hagen notwendig König Gunther steht, daß ohne dessen Mitwissen und Zutun er nie sein Leben hätte zu lassen brauchen. . . . [17]

Gunther's willing participation in the death of his friend who had earlier saved his life and helped him to attain the object of his most fervent desires is the very negation of "r^icher muot", which seeks only the welfare of others and particularly of those to whom one is so deeply indebted.

A final indication that Gunther lacks the spirit of "r^icher muot" is found in his treatment of Kriemhild. Kriemhild is fully aware of her brother's role in the death of Siegfried, and she feels only enmity towards him. When Hagen suggests that the king seek to be reconciled with her for the express purpose of bringing the treasure of the Nibelungs into the realm, Gunther is willing and eager to do so (1107-1108, 1). His primary motive for seeking the reconciliation is neither love for his sister nor remorse for his crime but greed and the desire for the honor which such riches will bring to him and to his kingdom. Furthermore, when it later becomes apparent that Kriemhild is using the

treasure to win the service of countless knights, thus posing a threat of revenge to Gunther and Hagen, the king allows himself to be persuaded by Hagen to deprive her of her wealth. As in his dealings with Siegfried, Gunther at first attempts to act honorably, reminding Hagen that he has sworn to do his sister no further harm. But when Hagen offers to assume responsibility for the act ("'lât mich den schuldigen sîn.'", 1131, 4), Gunther promptly acquiesces. The treasure - Kriemhild's "Morgengabe" and one of her last tangible reminders of Siegfried - is sunk into the Rhine, and Kriemhild grieves anew (1133, 4). It is, of course, true that Gunther overrides Hagen's objections to the marriage of Kriemhild and Etzel and that he explicitly speaks out in favor of the union and of the happiness which it will bring his sister. But his support of the proposed marriage is not necessarily indicative of a loving, caring attitude towards Kriemhild. As Friedrich Panzer implies, it costs Gunther nothing and in no way threatens him to approve of the union: ". . . vor etwaiger Feindschaft Etzels sei er durch die weite Entfernung gesichert."[18]

Even though the initially negative portrayal of Gunther is somewhat modified in the second half of the epic in that Gunther courageously accepts his destiny and fights bravely to the bitter end of the conflict with the Huns,[19] we find no evidence to indicate that he is truly milte, except in the traditional, conventional sense of the word. He exhibits concern for the welfare of his people (see especially 1736) and he is exceedingly generous to messengers as well as to his guests on festive occasions, but he lacks the spirit of "rîcher muot". His primary con-

cern is the fulfillment of his own will, as is evidenced by his dishonorable and uncourtly treatment of Brunhild. He easily forgets his debt to the man who saved his life and helped him to attain his goals, and he is more concerned with his sister's riches than with her happiness and well-being. For Gunther, milte is an external convention devoid of all depth and spirit. This fact contributes in large measure to the negative portrayal of the king in the epic.

2. Siegfried. The portrayal of Siegfried with regard to the virtue of milte is in many respects similar to that of Gunther. Like Gunther, Siegfried is exceptionally generous in the traditional sense of the word. Since he possesses the almost inexhaustible treasure of the Nibelungs and is thus far richer than Gunther, he is ostensibly even more generous than his friend. On the occasion of his "Schwertleite" he liberally bestows gifts on the young men who are knighted along with him (39, 3f.). It is he who urges Gunther not to accept the monetary restitution which is rightfully due the king from his former enemies, the Saxons (315). Even though his suggestion is partly inspired by tactical and political considerations, it is nevertheless magnanimous.[20] When Siegfried brings Kriemhild the joyous news that her brother has returned safely from Island, he accepts a reward of twenty-four rings from her and promptly distributes them to her ladies-in-waiting in a thoroughly generous and courtly gesture (558). Later, upon receiving Gunther's invitation to attend a celebration in Worms, Siegfried and his wife reward the messengers so liberally that the men are unable to carry home all their gifts without the help of additional

beasts of burden (764). For their extraordinary magnanimity the couple receives the highest praises at Gunther's court (774). As in the case of Gunther, however, all of Siegfried's demonstrations of milte occur within the framework of courtly convention. Siegfried observes the external forms of milte in a most perfect and exemplary way; and yet he, like Gunther, for the most part lacks the spirit of "rîcher muot".

In the initial stages, Siegfried's courtship of Kriemhild parallels Gunther's approach to the wooing of Brunhild. Having heard reports of Kriemhild's extraordinary beauty, Siegfried decides that he will win her love, and the means by which he accomplishes that end are a matter of indifference to him. He tells his father of his planned departure to Worms and then responds to Sigmunt's warning of the perils of such an undertaking by announcing that what cannot be won by peaceful means can easily be gained by virtue of strength:

> "swaz ich friwentlîche niht ab in erbit,
> daz mac sus erwerben mit ellen dâ mîn hant.
> ich trouwe an in ertwingen beide liut unde lant."
> (55, 2ff.)

Upon arrival in Gunther's realm, Siegfried informs the king of his intention to "ertwingen swaz ir muget hân" (110, 3), regardless of how Gunther and his people might feel about such an action. Although thoughts of Kriemhild (i.e., the civilizing influence of minne) divert him from his original plan to seize what he wants by means of "Faustrecht", two things become clear at this early juncture of the epic. Siegfried lacks the attitude of "rîcher muot" in that his own wishes take precedence over Gunther's legal right to reign peacefully over his land. Moreover, Siegfried's initial intention to win Kriemhild by force

is a negation of the spirit of courtliness and minne. As we noted in our discussion of Gunther, the love of a woman is to be won by means of service, not by force.

Siegfried places himself in the service of Gunther and indeed renders him valuable aid, but that aid cannot be construed as unequivocal evidence of milte, since it is not rendered without a great deal of self-interest. Because Siegfried desires Kriemhild, he is willing to help Gunther in any way that he is able and even to resort to unethical means in the process: "Schlechterdings alles will er tun, um nur Kriemhilt zu gewinnen - auch über die Grenzen des Sittlichen hinweg."[21] Siegfried's use of deception in the contests against Brunhild constitutes a basic violation of her human rights, as we noted above. But Siegfried is not content merely to stop at that point. Having subdued the queen, he gloats about her alleged subjugation at the hands of Gunther:

> "Sô wol mich dirre maere", sprach Sîfrit der degen,
> daz iuwer hôhverte sint alsô hie gelegen,
> daz iemen lebet der iuwer meister müge sîn.
> nu sult ir, maget edele, uns hinnen volgen an den Rîn." (474)

The attitude of übermuot - an attitude rarely displayed by one who truly possesses the attribute of "rîcher muot" - is clearly inherent in his words to Brunhild, just as it is inherent in the taking of trophies of ring and belt when Siegfried once again subdues her on her wedding night (679-80).

In his discussion of the taking of trophies, J. K. Bostock accurately remarks that it is "in consequence of his wickedness in helping Gunther to win Brunhild" that Siegfried is "compelled by the circum-

stances which he had himself created to aid Gunther again."[22] Bostock goes on to observe that by carrying away the symbols of the queen's virginity and marital fidelity and then giving them to his wife, Siegfried paves the way for his certain demise. He quotes Maurer's assertion that it is tragic that Siegfried is murdered for a crime which he did not commit but adds that Siegfried was not, in fact, innocent, "for he had brought his fate upon himself through his own self-centered folly."[23] The self-centered folly of which Bostock so aptly speaks is the very antithesis of "rîcher muot". Siegfried, like Gunther, is milte only in the conventional sense of the word. He, too, places the fulfillment of his own desires ahead of the rights and desires of others and ahead of ethical considerations. In this sense both men differ from the typical heroes of the courtly epic who, in addition to being courageous, also uphold the highest standards of courtly behavior. The depiction of Gunther and Siegfried is more one-sided than that of their counterparts in the courtly epic because it centers around the affirmation of their own will. It is precisely the tendency of both men to assert their own will - at whatever cost and with total disregard for the standards of courtly conduct - which leads to their ultimate destruction.

3. Brunhild. Although the epithet milte is seldom ascribed to women in precourtly and courtly literature, the author of the Nibelungenlied explicitly refers to Brunhild as "fürsten tohter milt" (420, 2), and he also depicts her in at least one situation which would seem to suggest that she merits such an epithet. Shortly after Brunhild is defeated by Siegfried and Gunther, she appoints Dancwart to distribute costly gifts to Gunther's people (513-14). As queen of the kingdom and

future wife of Gunther, she is obliged by the laws of courtly etiquette to display generosity to her guests, and she willingly does so. The fact that she protests when Dancwart gives away virtually all of her wealth - "'Er gît sô rîche gâbe, jâ waenet des der degen,/ ich habe gesant nâch tôde . . . . '" (518, 1f.) - is not indicative of lack of generosity on her part. As Weber observes, this scene is meant to reveal her justifiable mistrust of Gunther and his men.[24] Moreover, by distributing all her riches, Dancwart deprives the queen of future opportunities to give freely of her own possessions. She is not satisfied by Hagen's assurances that Gunther is himself a wealthy ruler and will therefore provide her with ample treasure to distribute (519). Instead, she insists that she be allowed to retain part of her own wealth so that she will not forfeit her royal prerogative of exercising generosity (520). Her insistence indicates that she, like Gunther and Siegfried, is also milte in the conventional sense.

Even though Brunhild conforms to the external conventions of milte, we find no evidence to indicate that she possesses the attribute of "rîcher muot". On the contrary, despite the fact that she is the victim of lies and deception, she is not presented as a noble and selfless individual whose righteous behavior contrasts sharply to that of Gunther and Siegfried. In the first place, the fact that she sentences to death all suitors who fail to defeat her instead of simply refusing their offers of marriage is indicative of arrogance and excessive self-esteem. These qualities again come to the fore after Brunhild's fateful quarrel with her sister-in-law. When Siegfried offers to swear that he is

innocent of the charges that he had taken Brunhild's virginity, all appear to be satisfied with Gunther's resolution of the situation except Brunhild and Hagen, who cannot forgive such an offense to the honor of the queen. It is Hagen who decides that Siegfried must pay with his life for the insult to the queen and to the honor of the people (867, 3). Brunhild does not play an active role in Siegfried's murder, but she acquiesces in its execution:

> Sie kann die Ausführung des Mordplanes getrost Hagen überlassen und sich selbst im Hintergrund halten. Das Wesentliche ist: Sie hindert es nicht; im Gegenteil: sie ist voll und ganz einverstanden - genau so, wie sie es spontan angekündigt hatte. [See 845, 4] Als der Plan zur Reife gediehen ist, sagt der Dichter lapidar: *daz hete geraten Prünhilt, des künic Guntheres wîp* (917, 4). Es ist dies nichts mehr als folgerichtig und wird auch - etwa von Hagen - so empfunden (1001; 1013). Gewiß ziehen Brünhilt und Hagen hier an einem Strang; aber es bleibt bedeutsam, daß es Brünhilt in ihrem Zorn und ihrem Leid ist, die Hagens Tun entfesselt.[25]

In addition to being instrumental in Siegfried's death, Brunhild is also totally indifferent to Kriemhild's suffering as a result of the loss of her husband: "Prünhilt diu schoene mit übermüete saz./ swaz geweinte Kriemhilt, unmaere was ir daz." (1100, lf.). Her failure to show even the slightest sign of compassion in the face of Kriemhild's anguish reveals a total lack of the spirit of *milte*, which encompasses mercy as well as generosity. That she persists in this attitude is implicit in one of the three remaining passages in which her name occurs in the epic. When Wärbel and Swämmel arrive in Worms with an invitation to a "hochzît" in Etzel's realm, Gunther is willing to allow them to appear before his wife. Dancwart, however, prevents

them from seeing the queen, whose reaction to his intervention is one of satisfaction: "daz was ir liebe getân." (1485, 4) Thoughts of a possible reconciliation with her sister-in-law are as far from Brunhild's mind as they are from Kriemhild's. For her as for Siegfried and Gunther, milte is merely an external convention devoid of the spirit of "rîcher muot". She, like they, is depicted as an essentially one-sided character whose own will and desires take precedence over all else.

4. Kriemhild. With the sole exceptions of Ruedeger and of the inordinately wealthy Siegfried, no other figure in the Nibelungenlied displays generosity as frequently and as lavishly as Kriemhild. We noted above, for example, that Siegfried and Kriemhild so richly bestowed gifts upon Gunther's messengers that the men were insufficiently equipped to carry home all their newly-acquired treasures (764). Kriemhild is explicitly characterized as "fürsten wine milt" (1746, 1), and the word milte often occurs in passages which describe her conduct. Even when the word itself is not found, milte is implicit in Kriemhild's actions on numerous occasions. But despite the fact that Kriemhild is repeatedly depicted in a generous posture and despite the fact that her giving at times knows no bounds, two factors prohibit us from regarding her as the incorporation of the virtue of milte. She, like the other characters discussed thus far, is liberal only in the conventional sense of the word. Her liberality differs from theirs, however, in that after the death of Siegfried milte becomes a tool for gaining power and influence so that she might avenge the murder of her husband.

Although we frequently find that milte is a legitimate means to an end in precourtly as well as courtly literature (rulers are customarily generous to their subjects in order to win their services and their loyalty), we seldom witness the use of generosity for the exclusive purpose of calculated vengeance. As soon as the treasure of the Nibelungs is delivered to Kriemhild, however, she begins to distribute it without limit to alien knights in order to secure their services (1127). At first Gunther does not object to her liberality, since he wishes to preserve his hard-won reconciliation with his sister and also because he does not realize that she intends to use the treasure to an evil end. It is only after the politically more astute Hagen detects her ulterior motives and alerts the king that Gunther acts:

> Den armen unt den rîchen begonde si nu geben
> daz dâ reite Hagene, ob si solde leben
> noch deheine wîle, daz si sô manigen man
> in ir dienst gewunne daz ez in leide mües' ergân.
> (1128)

Hagen easily persuades the king to deprive Kriemhild of the treasure, but the loss of the greatest portion of her inherited wealth in no way deters her from her goal. When Ruedeger brings her Etzel's offer of marriage, Kriemhild at first refuses to accept but soon changes her mind when she realizes the extent of Etzel's power and wealth:

> Si gedâhte: "sît daz Etzel der recken hât sô vil,
> sol ich den gebieten, sô tuon ich swaz ich wil.
> er ist ouch wol sô rîche, daz ich ze gebene hân."
> (1260, 1ff.)

Moreover, having attained the oath of Ruedeger and his men that they will avenge her in the event that anyone does her harm, Kriemhild sets out to strengthen their loyalty to her by distributing large portions

of her remaining wealth, despite Hagen's protests (1270-81).

Kriemhild's generosity not only continues but substantially increases after she is united with Etzel. At the "hochzît" celebrating their marriage, Kriemhild wins the favor of many people whom she has never seen before by means of extraordinary liberality. The recipients of her gifts are amazed at her display of wealth, since they believe that she had been deprived of her fortune: "'wir wânden daz vrou Kriemhilt niht guotes möhte hân:/ nu ist hie mit ir gâbe vil manic wúnder getân.'" (1366, 3f.)

Having assumed the throne which Helche had once occupied, Kriemhild attempts to demonstrate to her new subjects that she is in every respect her predecessor's equal. All that we read of Helche indicates that she had possessed the true spirit of milte and of courtliness as well. The poet speaks of the "guoter tugende" which Helche had displayed (1389, 1), and he states that Kriemhild strives to imitate her in this respect. Thus she learns the customs of the Hunnish court; but in contrast to the virtues of Helche, Kriemhild's courtliness, like her milte, is a veneer which is calculated to win her the esteem and loyalty of her subjects so that she might use them later to her own purposes. Helche is thereby replaced by a queen whose ultimate goal is not the well-being of her subjects but the attainment of her own will.

In two different passages the author reveals that Kriemhild surpasses Helche in winning the esteem of her subjects primarily because of her generosity; significantly, in both passages he consciously juxtaposes a description of the queen's generosity with the dire results of

her giving. In the first instance we read:

> dô teilte diu küneginne golt unt ouch gewant.
> silber unt gesteine. swaz si des über Rîn
> mit ir zen Hiunen brâhte, daz muose gar zergeben sîn.
> (1384, 2ff.)

A summary of the consequences of her unlimited generosity immediately follows:

> Ouch wurden ir mit dienste sider undertân
> alle des küniges mâge unt alle sîne mân,
> daz nie diu vrouwe Helche so gewælteclîch gebôt,
> sô si nú muosen dienen unz an den Kriemhilde tôt.
> (1385)

In the second instance we learn that Kriemhild's liberality earns her the reputation of being "bezzer unde milter" than any queen who had ever before reigned (1390, 3). Having won the undivided loyalty of her benefactors, she immediately considers how to put such an asset to use:

> Nu het si wol erkunnen daz ir niemen widerstuont,
> alsô noch fürsten wîbe küneges recken tuont,
> unt daz si alle zîte zwelf künige vor ir sach.
> si gedâht' ouch maniger leide, der ir dâ héimé geschach. (1391)

It is not long before she draws the logical conclusion: "I am so rich and have so many possessions that I can certainly inflict harm on my enemies." (1396)

After Kriemhild has persuaded Etzel to invite her relatives to a celebration, her use of milte for the attainment of an evil and destructive end becomes ever more overt. As she observes the arrival of the Burgundians, she states, "'swer nemen welle golt,/ der gedenke mîner leide, und wil im immer wesen holt.'" (1717, 3f.) Later, in the presence of Hagen, Kriemhild offers unlimited wealth to anyone who is willing to destroy her most hated enemy (1765-69). When she is unable

to win the service of anyone who is strong enough to kill him, she turns to Bloedelin, promising him land, silver, gold, and even the widow of Nuodung as a reward for his help (1903-07). It is at this point that Kriemhild's total lack of moderation in her desire for revenge becomes most obvious. She is not content merely to offer her own goods to Bloedelin; instead, she panders to his baser desires and totally disregards the rights and feelings of the widow by offering her like chattel to a potential ally. She wants only to accomplish her objective, and she is willing to use any means available to do so.

Kriemhild's use of milte for the exclusive purpose of revenge after the death of Siegfried gives rise to a question which must certainly have occurred to the courtly audience for whom the Nibelungenlied was written: Can generosity be construed as milte if it is exercised solely for the sake of ulterior motives? The author of the epic explicitly describes many of Kriemhild's generous acts as demonstrations of milte. But if we consider the discrepancy between the queen's ostensibly honorable actions and her thoroughly ignoble motives for performing them, the intention of the author becomes unmistakably apparent. He seeks to provide us with a portrait of a character who perfectly observes the external conventions of milte but totally lacks the underlying spirit of that virtue. His intention becomes even more apparent if we recall the words of Thomasin, who best expresses the thoughts of the courtly era about milte: "diu milte . . . hât niht die boesen lêre/ daz si gebe dâ si neme iht . . . . " (Thomasin, 14339ff.). Kriemhild's generosity represents the absolute perversion of the virtue of

milte, which gives without the hope of receiving something in return and seeks only the welfare of its recipients.

Thus far we have seen that the figures who have the greatest impact on the major events of the Nibelungenlied are those in whom the spirit of milte is lacking. The epic is not without characters who exemplify the spirit of "rîcher muot", but, as we noted earlier, they have a relatively smaller role in shaping the course of events. These characters are Sigmunt, Etzel and Ruedeger.

5. Sigmunt. That Sigmunt is a generous ruler becomes apparent as early as the "Schwertleite" of Siegfried. Milte plays a prominent role in the description of the festivities, and it is the hosts, Sigmunt and Siglint, whose liberality exceeds that of anyone present (27, 4; 29, 2ff.; 38, 3f.). Sigmunt also displays generosity on the occasion of Siegfried's departure to Worms. Although he has misgivings about the trip and attempts to dissuade his son from leaving, he accepts Siegfried's decision and provides him with all that is necessary for the journey (66). While it is true that Sigmunt's generosity on these occasions represents the conventional sort of milte, his treatment of Kriemhild after Siegfried's death reveals that he also possesses the attribute of "rîcher muot".

After the burial of his son, Sigmunt approaches Kriemhild with the significant words, "'wir suln in unser lant.'" (1073, 2; our underlining). Siegfried's death in no way diminishes the loving concern of Sigmunt for his daughter-in-law. On the contrary, he announces that she will retain his favor ("'ich wil iu waege sîn/ durch mînes suns liebe,'" 1074, 3f.) and that his land shall continue to be her land as well. Because

Kriemhild had become queen of her husband's realm by virtue of marriage, she no longer has the right to reign there now that Siegfried is dead. But Sigmunt generously overlooks both law and custom, declaring that Kriemhild shall continue to rule in his kingdom and to enjoy all her former privileges:

> "Ir sult ouch haben, vrouwe, allen den gewalt,
> den iu ê tete künde Sîfrit der degen balt.
> daz lant und ouch die krône, daz sî iu undertân.
> îr suln gerne dienen alle Sîfrides man." (1075)

His offer is a clear manifestation of the attitude of "rîcher muot" in that it is made out of love and rendered "nâch rehte", i.e., according to the dictates of milte rather than "von reht", i.e., in conjunction with the dictates of justice. When Kriemhild informs Sigmunt of her decision to remain in Worms, Sigmunt reiterates his magnanimous offer (1086). That it was meant sincerely is revealed by the genuine sorrow which he feels when he departs from Kriemhild: "wie rehte jâmerlîche schiet dô Sigemunt/ von vroun Kriemhilde! dô was im ungemüete kunt." (1091, 3f.; see also 1094, 3f.).

In the case of Sigmunt there is no dichotomy between the external conventions of milte and the inner attitude of "rîcher muot". He is milte both in the traditional sense of the word and in the sense of displaying a genuinely loving, caring and magnanimous attitude towards others. Sigmunt, however, plays no role in shaping the course of events in the epic. Just as he was unable to persuade Siegfried to remain with him rather than riding away to challenge Gunther, so is he unable to convince Kriemhild to return with him to a peaceful life in the Netherlands. After his departure from Kriemhild he vanishes from the

epic, and the remaining events are determined by characters far less magnanimous than he.

6. Etzel. In our discussion of Parzival, we saw that the virtue of milte was by no means limited to the Christian realm. The heathen Feirefiz was equally as magnanimous as his Christian counterparts, and he displayed a high degree of courtliness as well. Etzel, too, is a heathen; he, like Feirefiz, epitomizes nobility and generosity of spirit. That Etzel is, in the words of Weber, "edeldenkend und aufgeklärt, und zwar in höchstem Ausmaß"[27] is evident from the fact that heathens and Christians alike live together in peace and prosperity in his realm (1334). Etzel is able to attract such a diverse following not only because of his tolerance but also because of his great generosity:

> Bî im was z' allen zîten, (daz waetlîch mêr ergê)
> kristenlîcher orden unt ouch der heiden ê.
> in swie getânem lebene sich ietslîcher truoc,
> daz schuof des küniges milte, daz man in allen gap
> genuoc. (1335)

As Weber notes, " . . . die humane Rittergesinnung König Etzels mit ihrer Krönung einer ganz außerordentlichen milte läßt religiöse Gegensätze gar nicht in Erscheinung treten."[28]

When Kriemhild asks Etzel to invite her relatives to a "hochzît", the king's magnanimity of spirit becomes even more evident, as does the qualitative difference between him and his queen. Kriemhild takes full advantage of her husband's love, using it - just as she does her wealth - as a means to gain her revenge. At a moment of great intimacy between husband and wife, she thinks only of her enemies, while Etzel, in his love for Kriemhild, is willing to grant her whatever she requests:

Dô si eines nahtes bî dem künige lac,
(mit armen umbevangen het er si, als er pflac
die edeln vrouwen triuten: si was im als sîn lîp),
dô gedâhte ir viende daz vil hêrliche wîp. (1400)

Etzel is at once favorably disposed towards the suggestion of a celebration, not only because he wishes to make Kriemhild happy but also because he bears good will towards his wife's relatives and rejoices at the possibility of increasing their good fortune: "'ich bringe iuch des wol innen, swâ liep unde guot/ den recken widerfüere, des müese ich freude hân . . . . '" (1402, 2f.) Upon hearing sometime later that his invitation has been accepted, Etzel informs the queen that not even the arrival of his own kinsmen could make him happier (1504, 2).

The sincerity of Etzel's good will towards the Burgundians continues to be apparent as the guests approach his realm. Etzel orders that they be received well (1715), and he cannot conceal his joy at the news of their arrival: "vor liebe er lachén began." (1716, 4) As Gunther later enters the palace, Etzel leaps up from his throne and goes forward to greet him: "ein gruoz sô rehte schoene von künege nie mêr geschach." (1808, 4) His reception of the Burgundians is marked not only by great courtesy but also by great personal warmth, as his words of welcome reveal: "'mir enkúnde in dirre werlde lieber niht geschehen/ danne ouch an iu helden, daz ir mir sît bekomen.'" (1813, 2f.) He provides them with an elaborate banquet which is enhanced by his amiable presence, and he willingly grants them whatever they desire (1817). Etzel departs from his guests that evening on the best of terms with them ("er schiet von sînen gesten vil harte vroelîchen duo.", 1819, 4), only

to awaken to an awareness of the tensions of which he had previously been unaware.

Because Etzel is keenly aware of his responsibilities as a host and because he bears the Burgundians good will, he does all that he is able to ease the growing tensions. When he finds his guests heavily armed on their way to the cathedral, he fears that they have endured injury or insult from his people and promptly offers to make amends (1861-62). Hagen denies that anything is amiss and attributes the bearing of arms to Burgundian custom, whereupon the author informs us, "het iemen gesaget Etzeln diu rehten maere,/ er het' wol understanden daz doch sît dâ geschach." (1865, 2f.) After Volker kills a wealthy Hun during the initial stages of a tournament, it is Etzel's intervention which prevents further bloodshed. Brandishing a sword at his own people, he assures them that the death of their kinsman occurred accidentally and demands that they leave the Burgundians in peace (1895-96). He then invites his guests to dine with him and joyfully introduces them to his son Ortlieb. His suggestion that the young prince accompany them to the Netherlands to be educated in their midst prompts Hagen's expression of contempt for the youth (1918). Although Hagen's words deeply wound Etzel and thoroughly destroy his feeling of happiness, he remains silent and displays a remarkable degree of self-control and restraint in the face of such an insult.

Etzel is ill rewarded for his display of "rîcher muot" towards the Burgundians. In his presence, Hagen slays Ortlieb. Not content to stop at that point, he also heaps words of scorn upon the king and even

accuses him of complicity in Kriemhild's treacherous plans (2023). But it is Volker whose words are most devastating to Etzel. As Weber notes:

> Dann vollendet Volker Hagens zerstörendes Werk: von jämmerlichen Feiglingen sei dieser Fürst umgeben, die nur in seinem Reichtum schmarotzten, aber wenn's drauf ankäme, nichts für ihn zu leisten gedächten (2026f.). Etzels humane Geistigkeit, in unerhörter Freigebigkeit gipfelnd, scheint wie in Scherben zerschlagen.[29]

Soon afterwards Etzel assembles an army to fight against the Burgundians; but it is only at the very last moment when all else has failed that he resorts to such drastic measures against his former friends. Although Etzel appears in a pathetic light when he later throws himself at the feet of Ruedeger and begs his loyal servant to intervene on his behalf (2152), and although he thinks only of himself when he promises to share his kingdom with Ruedeger in exchange for his help (2158) - a gesture that would seem to negate the assertion that he possesses the attribute of "rîcher muot" - , it must be stressed that he is threatened with extinction and has no other recourse but to resort to such behavior. If Ruedeger fails to help him, he is lost.

Like Sigmunt, Etzel is portrayed as a noble and magnanimous ruler. Panzer describes him as "Musterbild eines ritterlichen Königs"[30] and Weber remarks that he represents "gewissermaßen die modernsten Ideologien der eigenen Zeit".[31] Despite his noble stature, however, he has relatively little impact on the major events in the latter part of the epic. Weber attributes Etzel's inability to stem the tide of disaster to two basic causes. On the one hand, Etzel is already past his prime when the Burgundians accept his fateful invitation; on the other, he senses

only too late what is actually taking place around him: "Etzel . . . besitzt zwar den denkbar besten Willen, aber auch eine kaum überbietbare Instinktlosigkeit."[32] It is certainly true that Etzel is advanced in years and no longer possesses the full strength and vigor of his youth, just as it is true that he is at first wholly unaware of Kriemhild's plotting. But the "Instinktlosigkeit" of which Weber speaks is as admirable as it is blameworthy. Because Etzel is himself noble and forthright, it does not occur to him that others - and particularly his own wife - do not also possess these same qualities. And because he has done everything possible to make Kriemhild happy, he has no reason to suspect that she still mourns the death of Siegfried and actively seeks to avenge his murder.

At the end of the work Etzel is a mere survivor of the tragedy which has engulfed his court. He himself escapes death, but the achievements of a lifetime of generosity and nobility lie in ruins, and there is no hint of a possible restoration of the ideality which he had once achieved when, together with his wife who was truly milte, he ruled over his kingdom. It is characteristic of the Nibelungenlied that the most magnanimous individuals in the work are in the end victims of circumstances over which they have little or no control. This is certainly the case with Sigmunt and Etzel, and to a certain extent it proves to be true of Ruedeger as well.

7. Ruedeger. Few figures in medieval German literature have been the subject of such numerous studies and have generated as much controversy as has the figure of Ruedeger of Bechlarn. The diversity of

opinion in the interpretation of this character can scarcely be overemphasized. On the one hand, Ruedeger is regarded as the incorporation of milte and of courtliness - in short, of all that is noble and admirable according to the standards of the era during which the Nibelungenlied was written. On the other hand, he is viewed as a self-seeking individual whose ultimate concern is not the well-being of others but the preservation, at whatever cost, of his external honor. Between these two extremes one finds a wide range of interpretations which either stress the extraordinary milte of the hero or concentrate on the dilemma in which he finds himself in the thirty-seventh aventiure of the epic. Of the many studies concerned with Ruedeger, the basic arguments of three must be briefly summarized here, not only because they best represent the various viewpoints which have emerged in literary scholarship during recent years but also because they have important implications for our topic. These are the studies of Peter Wapnewski, Gottfried Weber and Jochen Splett.

The special merit of Wapnewski's article entitled "Rüdigers Schild: Zur 37. Aventiure des Nibelungenliedes" is its careful and detailed analysis of the legal implications of Ruedeger's conflict in that aventiure. Wapnewski focuses on the fact that the episode under discussion is laden with termini technici from the sphere of feudal justice; by doing so, he paves the way for a more exact interpretation of the events at that juncture of the epic. At the same time, however, he chooses the problem of justice as the only basis for his interpretation of the episode and thus concludes that Ruedeger's dilemma is to be regarded as

"einen prinzipiell rechtlichen Konflikt".[33] For Wapnewski, Ruedeger is the loyal vassal of Etzel who, when confronted with the choice between duty to his friends and duty to his liege lord, quite rightly decides in favor of the latter: " . . . Rüdiger ist letztlich nicht im Zweifel, welchen Weg er, gestellt zwischen Freundestreue und Lehnsmannenpflicht, zu gehen hat: ich muoz leisten als ich gelobet hân." (Wapnewski, p. 391) Wapnewski acknowledges that the decision is a painful one for Ruedeger, but at the same time he stresses Ruedeger's awareness of the morality of the decision. Because the choice is, in the final analysis, a clear and obvious one for Ruedeger, Wapnewski does not speak of a "crisis of conscience" or of a "grave moral dilemma" in his interpretation of this episode. In this respect his viewpoint differs radically from that of Weber.

Wapnewski at no time casts doubt upon the fact that Ruedeger is a generous and magnanimous individual, but in his discussion of Ruedeger's gift of the shield to Hagen, it is Hagen and not Ruedeger who emerges as the central figure. Wapnewski asserts " . . .daß die Schildgabe wenig aussagt über den Charakter Rüdigers, die Schildbitte aber viel aussagt über den Charakter Hagens." (Wapnewski, p. 395) He argues that Ruedeger need not prove himself by means of the gift, since the Burgundians do not doubt his goodness even after he announces that he is obliged to fight against them, adding that the special significance of the aventiure is to be found in Hagen's magnanimity which prompts him to request the shield:

> Des Markgrafen Seelengröße braucht sich nicht eigens
> zu bewähren, sie bewährt sich schon darin, daß er,

> dem Gesetz seines gradus gehorchend, den Kampf gegen die Freunde aufnimmt. Was vielmehr sich in diesem Akt und an ihm bewährt, ist die Seelengröße der Burgunden, wie sie sichtbar wird in Hagen. Er erlaubt Rüdiger, ihm noch einmal eine Freundestat zu erweisen - das meint: er versteht, er verzeiht. (Wapnewski, p. 396)

Ruedeger, then, is a "passive" hero whose merit lies in his understanding and acceptance of Hagen's gesture. He bears the Burgundians true friendship, but the course of action which he must take would seem to contradict that reality; hence Hagen "forces" him to make an open act of friendship in the form of the gift. Hagen then declares that he himself will not fight against Ruedeger, whereupon an exchange of roles occurs:

> Rüdiger, Inbild der Freundschaft, Güte, der zart beschenkenden Liebe, läßt seine Freunde im Stich, um die Lehenstreue zu halten. Hagen, Inbild der Vasallität, der in der unbarmherzigen Härte seines Lehnsmannenbegriffs selbst den Mord nicht gescheut hatte, läßt seine Herren im Stich, um die Freundestreue zu halten. (Wapnewski, p. 398)

Wapnewski's interpretation, which ends with the highest praises of Ruedeger as the ideal representation of a prince who remains loyal to his lord until death, differs substantially from that of Gottfried Weber.[34] Although Weber also acknowledges the fact that Ruedeger is extraordinarily generous, he asserts that the overriding motive for all of Ruedeger's actions is the desire to increase his honor in the eyes of the world. According to Weber, Ruedeger accepts the role of "Brautwerber" primarily for the sake of the recognition which it will bring him: ". . . es ist das Ehrenvolle dieser Botschaft, was ihm äußerst am Herzen liegt." (Weber, p. 86) He maintains that Ruedeger is aware of Kriemhild's

undying love for Siegfried but that he undertakes the task of winning the queen for his lord despite his knowledge of this fact and despite his awareness that the two are unsuited for one another. That Ruedeger does not refuse Etzel's request despite his reservations about the prospective marriage is, in Weber's opinion, the hero's first mistake and "zweifelsohne ein sittlicher Mangel". (Weber, p. 99) The first mistake inevitably leads to a second one, " . . . nämlich zu einer letztlich brutalen (in der Form natürlich höfisch vollendeten) Überspielung der starken und sicher sittlich mehr als berechtigten Abneigung Kriemhilts gegen die Heirat mit Etzel." (Weber, p. 99) Ruedeger is allegedly willing to resort to any means to persuade Kriemhild to marry Etzel; he takes the fateful oath, not realizing its possible implications because his desire for honor blinds him to potential disaster.

According to Weber, Ruedeger's generosity and hospitality towards the Burgundians during their stay in his land can also be attributed to the hero's desire for honor: " . . . es ehrt und befriedigt diesen Mann in tiefster Seele, daß die burgundischen Fürsten gerade seine Dienste in Anspruch nehmen." (Weber, p. 87) Because Ruedeger feels so deeply honored, he accompanies his guests to Etzel's realm, where his happiness at the recognition accorded him prevents him from seeing the danger which awaits his friends there.

Unlike Wapnewski, Weber maintains that Ruedeger finds himself in the grips of a deep religious conflict when Kriemhild reminds him of his oath. In addition to feeling divided loyalties, Ruedeger fears that if he fights against the Burgundians he will lose his soul:

"Daz ist âne lougen, ich swuor iu, edel wîp,
daz ich durch iuch wâgte êre und ouch den lîp:
daz ich die sêle vliese, des enhân ich niht ge-
sworn." (2150, 1ff.)

But the dilemma, says Weber, has yet another dimension. If Ruedeger fails to side with either camp, he will lose all his honor in the sight of men, and this is his greatest concern: "'lâze aber ich si beide, mich schiltet elliu diet.'" (2154, 3) Ruedeger aligns himself with Etzel, true to his legal obligations as he perceives them but wholly contrary to the dictates of divine justice:

> Er verzichtet nicht in christlicher Entschlossenheit auf dieses Kämpfen, ist nicht bereit, ein fundamentales christliches Opfer zu bringen, nicht bereit, seine irdische Ehre und sein innerweltliches Ansehen am Altare Gottes gehorsam und in der Haltung der diemüete niederzulegen. Es ist nicht Gott, den er am meisten liebt; sondern der, dem seine tiefste Liebe gilt, das ist er selbst, ist eben seine innermenschliche Ehre! (Weber, p. 91)

By siding with Etzel, Ruedeger abandons his duties not only as a Christian but also as a knight, since he knows that he is dealing with his friends in an evil and unknightly manner. He does so because although he is indeed "vater aller tugende", his virtues are primarily social ones, rooted in this world rather than in God. Ruedeger is a "Kulturchrist", unable to make the Christian sacrifice which the situation demands of him because a more powerful force is at work within him: "die weltliche Ehrgeltung". (Weber, p. 94)

For Weber, Hagen's request of the shield is not the extraordinary event of which Wapnewski speaks; thus he mentions it only in passing. Nor is Ruedeger's gift of the shield a particularly significant event. The gift enables Ruedeger to prove his friendship for the Burgundians,

despite his obligation to fight against them, and it also evokes Hagen's promise not to confront his friend in battle - a promise which deeply honors Ruedeger. But in actuality it changes nothing, because the battle soon begins. (Weber, p. 90)

The final study with which we must concern ourselves is Jochen Splett's book entitled Rüdiger von Bechelaren. Splett's interpretation merits discussion for two reasons. In the first place, it is based on a thorough and exhaustive analysis of all the passages in the Nibelungenlied in which Ruedeger plays a role. Secondly, it takes into account and comes to terms with all the pertinent secondary literature written prior to 1968. Of the interpretations dealt with thus far, Splett's is the most comprehensive.

In his discussion of Ruedeger as "Brautwerber" and as host of the Burgundians, Splett repeatedly stresses the hero's milte as well as his honorable and selfless attitude towards those with whom he comes into contact. While Wapnewski tends to take Ruedeger's generosity for granted and while Weber maintains that the hero's milte is to a large extent motivated by his desire for honor, Splett believes that Ruedeger is depicted as the incorporation of milte from the moment of his first appearance in the epic.[35] He argues that Ruedeger's actions are at all times aimed at promoting the best interests of others: Ruedeger accepts the role of "Brautwerber" solely with the honor of Etzel in mind; he acts as host to his companions in Bechlarn with the greatest concern for their comfort and well-being; he presents Etzel's offer of marriage to Kriemhild in the conviction that it is the best means of ending her years of

unhappiness and mourning; finally, he displays unlimited generosity and warmth towards the Burgundians during their stay in his land because of the genuine friendship and good will which he bears them. Unlike Weber, Splett finds not the slightest trace of self-interest or ignobility in Ruedeger's character prior to his appearance at the "hochzît" in Etzel's realm.

Splett's interpretation of the events in the thirty-seventh aventiure of the epic presents us with a somewhat different picture of Ruedeger. When Ruedeger is confronted with the conflicting demands of the two parties involved in the struggle - on the one hand his ties of friendship and kinship with the Burgundians and his legal obligations to them stemming from his guarantees of safe conduct, and on the other hand his duties to his liege lord and his oath to Kriemhild - he decides in favor of Etzel. His decision, Splett insists, is not a choice for the side of justice, as Wapnewski would have us believe, but a "capitulation". (Splett, p. 87) Ruedeger knows that he will incur guilt and lose his soul no matter which decision he makes. His words "'ich muoz iu leisten als ich gelobet han'", the cornerstone of Wapnewski's interpretation, do not represent an acknowledgement of his obligation to Etzel but merely indicate that he has made a choice in favor of one of the parties. (Splett, pp. 88f.) He makes that choice, even though he knows that it is morally wrong.

For Splett, Hagen's request of the shield is significant in that it sheds a final ray of light on the dismal catastrophe which overshadows the end of the work. (Splett, p. 95) Ruedeger's granting of the request,

in turn, enables him to prove that it was not easy for him to betray his friends: "Indem der Markgraf seinen Schild dahingibt, beseitigt er jeden nur möglichen Verdacht, die Freundestreue leichtsinnig verraten zu haben." (Splett, p. 96) In addition, by making peace with Hagen, Ruedeger has the opportunity to reestablish his honor and recognition in the eyes of the Burgundians, both of which had been marred by his decision to fight against them. (Splett, p. 98) Splett does not view the gesture of either man as an extraordinarily magnanimous one. Instead, he notes that Hagen violates his loyalty to his lords by his gesture of friendship to Ruedeger, and he stresses the gravity of such a breach of faith by recalling that Hagen betrays the very kings who, out of loyalty to him, had earlier refused to hand him over to Kriemhild. He adds that Ruedeger goes off to fight mercilessly against his opponents as a means of freeing himself from the torturous doubts that have plagued him - doubts which in the final analysis are never resolved. (Splett, pp. 99f.)

If we consider the implications of the three interpretations summarized here, it becomes clear that we are confronted with three very different impressions of Ruedeger with regard to the topic of milte and also with regard to the significance of the gift of the shield to Hagen. Wapnewski presents us with the picture of a nobleman who is clearly generous but whose most outstanding characteristic is triuwe rather than milte. Because it is obvious from the start that Ruedeger is the incorporation of milte and güete, his gift to Hagen is not an extraordinary act but merely the final proof of what has always been apparent. Hagen, not Ruedeger, is the hero of the thirty-seventh aventiure. Weber, on the other hand, depicts Ruedeger as a man whose primary concern is his own

external honor and all of whose actions are calculated to increase his recognition in the eyes of the world rather than to benefit his fellow man. If we accept Weber's arguments, we can only conclude that Ruedeger is the very incarnation of the antithesis of "rîcher muot". For the sake of his worldly honor he jeopardizes the welfare of his soul and fights against his friends; his gift to Hagen changes nothing. In contrast to Weber, Splett paints the picture of a very generous and honorable man; but he, like Weber, insists that in the end the hero is caught in a grave dilemma in which he makes a morally wrong decision. The transaction which occurs between Ruedeger and Hagen serves to re-establish Ruedeger's external honor in the eyes of the Burgundians, but it is not viewed by Splett as a particularly extraordinary event.

In light of the conflicting conclusions reached by three eminent and highly authoritative scholars, only a careful analysis of those parts of the text concerned with Ruedeger can determine the extent to which he possesses the virtue of milte as well as the significance of his gift to Hagen. We believe that it is possible to prove that Ruedeger, perhaps more than any other character in medieval German literature, epitomizes the spirit of "rîcher muot". We find that Weber, who offers accurate and penetrating insights into the other characters in the epic, conveys a totally erroneous impression of Ruedeger. Finally, we believe that both the request and the giving of the shield in the thirty-seventh aventiure convey the spirit of milte and courtliness more eloquently and more movingly than any other event in the literature of the courtly era. It is for these reasons that the figure of Ruedeger

merits such special consideration.

Ruedeger appears for the first time in the Nibelungenlied when the widower Etzel is urged by his advisors to win the love of Kriemhild. Because Etzel knows little about the Burgundians and because he also fears that the Christian queen might reject an offer of marriage from a heathen ruler, he turns to his friends for further information about the land and the people of his prospective bride. It is Ruedeger who steps forward to answer the king's questions. He states that he knows Kriemhild's brothers, whose êre and tugende he praises (1147-48), and he also assures Etzel of Kriemhild's extraordinary beauty, adding: "'den si lobt ze vriunde, der mac wol troesten sînen lîp.'" (1150,4) His statements clearly indicate that he believes the choice of Kriemhild to be a most appropriate one for his lord.

Upon learning that Ruedeger is personally acquainted with Kriemhild's closest relatives, Etzel requests that his loyal servant act as "Brautwerber". At the same time, he offers to finance the journey to Worms and also promises to richly reward Ruedeger for undertaking the task (1151-52). Ruedeger promptly rejects Etzel's generous offer ("'gerte ich dînes guotes, daz waere unlobelîch'", 1153, 2), declaring that he himself will bear the cost of the trip. The significance of Ruedeger's act of generosity is accurately analyzed by Splett: "Die großmütige, vornehme Geste charakterisiert ihn schon bei seinem ersten Auftreten und führt ihn uns als den vollendet höfischen Mann vor." (Splett, p. 44) In addition, this gesture also reveals that Ruedeger possesses the attribute of "rîcher muot". Since he is about to perform

an invaluable service for his lord - and one that will entail great expense - , he is entitled to accept Etzel's generosity. But because he is a thoroughly courtly individual, he considers it dishonorable to accept even further riches from the man who has already given him so much. As Splett observes, "Mit einer kurzen Bemerkung lehnt er die Belohnung ab und denkt nur daran, wie er für seinen Herrn eine prachtvolle und dessen Macht und Würde angemessene Gesandtschaft ausrüsten könne." (Splett, p. 45)[36]

As Ruedeger makes the necessary arrangements for the trip, he expresses a word of caution regarding Kriemhild:

> "Und ob duz, künic rîche, niht wil dar umb lân:
> si was ir edelen minne Sîfride undertân,
> dem Sigemundes kinde, den hâstu hie gesehen.
> man moht' im maniger êren mit rehter wârheite jehen."
> (1157)

We observed above that Weber interprets these words as a sign of Ruedeger's knowledge that Etzel and Kriemhild are unsuited for one another, arguing further that Ruedeger assumes the role of "Brautwerber" despite this knowledge because of his desire for the honor which it will bring him. However, since Ruedeger's earlier remarks indicate that he believes Kriemhild to be a most appropriate choice of a bride for Etzel, and since he does all that he is able to prepare for an appearance in Worms which will befit the honor of the king, it can only be concluded that he gives the king such a warning out of fear that Kriemhild might refuse the proposal, thereby diminishing Etzel's honor:

> Da sie die Frau des 'besten Mannes' gewesen ist
> und ihm in Liebe ganz zu eigen war, nimmt er an,
> daß ihr an einer Wiederverheiratung nichts liegt.
> Eine abschlägige Antwort würde aber seinem Herrn

> wenig Ehre einbringen, und davor will er ihn bewahren. Nun wird es auch verständlich, warum er sich so zurückhaltend ausdrückt. . . . aus Sorge um das Ansehen Etzels bemüht er sich, ihn von seinem Vorhaben abzuhalten. (Splett, p. 45)

It is not his own honor but the honor of his lord which Ruedeger believes to be at stake and with which he is primarily concerned. Such concern for Etzel is further evidence that Ruedeger possesses the attribute of "rîcher muot". For his part, Etzel understands Ruedeger's words as a warning against a marriage beneath his station and seeks to allay such fears (1158), whereupon Ruedeger accepts his lord's decision and dutifully resumes the preparations for the trip.

After Ruedeger departs with his retinue he goes to Bechlarn, where he does all that he can to provide for the comfort and well-being of his companions. The poet's choice of words underscores the hero's good will towards the men: "die sînen reisgesellen herbergen bat/ der wirt vil minneclîche unt schuof in guot gemach." (1165, 2f.) Ruedeger's hospitality is an expression of the loving concern which he feels for them; as such, it is also an expression of "rîcher muot". In addition to offering the men true hospitality, Ruedeger urges his wife to distribute goods to them so that their journey will be more enjoyable (1171). Each man receives whatever he wishes from Gotelind, whose boundless generosity parallels that of her husband (1172-73).

Ruedeger leaves Bechlarn one week later and arrives in Worms after a journey of twelve days. The reception accorded him by the Burgundians is marked not only by perfect observance of courtly etiquette but also by a high degree of personal warmth - a warmth inspired by

their knowledge of Ruedeger's integrity and goodness. Hagen and his friends pay special tribute to Ruedeger by running forward to meet him (1182), and Ortwin assures him that the Burgundians have never before been so happy to see guests in their land (1184). When Ruedeger presents himself to the king, Gunther rises from his throne, takes him by the hand, and seats him beside himself in the place of honor (1186-87). Kriemhild, too, welcomes Ruedeger warmly. Even though she has been informed of the reason for his visit and is totally opposed to the idea of marriage, she receives him "durch sîne manige tugende" (1221, 3). The author clearly indicates that if the messenger were anyone but Ruedeger, he would be sent away without being heard; thus it is by virtue of Ruedeger's outstanding personal merit that Kriemhild grants him an audience (1230).

Although Ruedeger appears before Kriemhild as a messenger of Etzel, whose best interests he is obliged to represent, he is equally concerned with the good fortune of Kriemhild. The queen's black dress, moist with tears, vividly reveals to him that Kriemhild still grieves because of Siegfried's death. Ruedeger understands the depth of Kriemhild's suffering, and he views Etzel's offer of marriage as the best possible means of transforming her sorrow into joy. When she at first rejects the proposal of marriage, Ruedeger points out to her that only true love such as that which Etzel offers her enables one to overcome heartfelt sorrow (1234). He also assures her that the marriage well befits her station, adding that she will become the wife of a powerful monarch who reigns over a kingdom where true courtliness flourishes

(1236). As Splett observes, Ruedeger attempts to persuade the queen to accept "was seiner Überzeugung nach das Beste für sie ist . . . . " (Splett, p. 50) Ruedeger's consideration for the welfare of the queen, in addition to being a manifestation of "rîcher muot", further disproves Weber's assertion that the nobleman has only his honor in mind when he attempts to win Kriemhild for his lord.

Ruedeger's first attempt to persuade Kriemhild to accept Etzel's offer is unsuccessful, as are the efforts of Giselher and Ute to make her aware of the advantages of such a union. It is not until Ruedeger again speaks to her, this time in absolute privacy, that Kriemhild allows herself to be convinced. The decisive factor is Ruedeger's promise to her, "er wolde si ergetzen swaz ir ie geschach." (1255,3) Upon hearing these words, Kriemhild becomes more favorably disposed to the proposal, and the oath which she demands of him dispels all further misgivings on her part:

> Mit allen sînen mannen swuor ir dô Rüedegêr
> mit triuwen immer dienen, unt daz die recken hêr
> ir nimmer niht versageten ûz Etzelen lant,
> des si êre haben solde, des sichert' ir Rüedegêres
> hant. (1258)

The ambiguous wording of the oath later works to Kriemhild's advantage. It is clear that Ruedeger thinks only of any possible harm which might befall the queen in the future, whereas Kriemhild quite obviously has in mind revenge for past injuries: "Do gedâhte diu getriuwe . . . 'waz ob noch wirt errochen des mînen lieben mannes lîp?'" (1259)[37]

After Ruedeger has accomplished his mission in Worms, he is seen again briefly at the wedding of Etzel and Kriemhild, where his extra-

ordinary milte serves as an expression of his joy at the union of the couple (1372, 4). His next major appearance occurs years later when he acts as host to the Burgundians, who are on their way to festivities in Etzel's kingdom. The travelers are totally exhausted when they reach the border of Ruedeger's kingdom. Their horses are worn out and their food supply is greatly diminished. When Hagen reports this sorry state of affairs to Eckewart, he receives most welcome news:

> Dô sprach aber Eckewart: "ich zeig' iu einen wirt,
> daz ir ze hûse selten sô wol bekomen birt
> in deheinem lande, als iu hie mác geschehen,
> ob ir vil snelle degene wellet Rüedegêren sehen.
>
> Der sitzet bî der strâze und ist der beste wirt,
> der ie kom ze hûse. sîn herze tugende birt,
> alsam der süeze meije daz gras mit bluomen tuot.
> swenne er sol hélden dienen, sô ist er vroelîch
> gemuot." (1638-39)

Splett calls attention to the significance of these words, which differ greatly from the language that is commonly used in the Nibelungenlied:

> Das Bild vom Herzen, dessen tugende mit Frühlingsblumen verglichen werden, erinnert an die ebenfalls isoliert stehenden Vergleiche in der 5. Aventiure, die Kriemhilds und Siegfrieds Schönheit preisen. Man wird erinnert an die Naturbilder des Minnesangs, und diese haben wohl auch den Nibelungendichter angeregt, die lyrische Metapher zu verwenden. (Splett, pp. 60f.)

The words are "ein erster Lichtstrahl" after the dangerous and wearisome days of travel, and they form the transition to the pleasant atmosphere which awaits the Burgundians in Bechlarn. Moreover, they serve to reintroduce Ruedeger just as he had first been introduced at the beginning of the twentieth aventiure: as the epitome of liberality. (Splett, p. 61) It is evident that such language could never be used in reference

to a character whose basic attitude is one of self-seeking opportunism and relentless drive for honor.

When Ruedeger learns that the Burgundians are approaching, he is unable to conceal his joy (1646). His words reinforce Eckewart's description of him:

> "Nu wol mich dirre geste", sprach dô Rüedêger,
> daz mir koment ze hûse dise recken hêr,
> den ich noch vil selten iht gedienet hân." (1648, 1ff.)

Ruedeger's expression of happiness is the very essence of the attitude of "rîcher muot" and eloquently refutes Weber's assertion that Ruedeger views the visit of the Burgundians as a means of increasing his external honor. He is not concerned with the honor that he will receive but only with the possibility of giving and of serving. His actions testify to this fact. He orders his people to ride out to meet the guests, urges his wife to receive them well, and instructs her and his daughter about the fine points of courtly etiquette which are to be observed when the guests arrive - in this case, the kissing ritual (1651-52). His preparations for their arrival are aimed at assuring a welcome which will both befit the honor of the guests and guarantee their comfort.

From the moment that the Burgundians arrive, Ruedeger's personal warmth and generosity prevail. His words of welcome to Gunther reveal his heartfelt happiness and convey that happiness to the king (1656). He promises his guests a comfortable night and provides for a watch over their possessions so that not even a single spur which belongs to them will be damaged. Moreover, he declares that he himself will

pay the cost, should any of their goods be lost (1659-60). These guarantees, which far exceed the demands which a guest might reasonably or legally make of a host, provide even further evidence that Ruedeger possesses the attribute of "rîcher muot". Describing the Burgundians' first night in Bechlarn, the author says, "jane dórften nimmer helde baz gehándelét sîn." (1688, 4)

After the guests have dined, Volker reflects upon the ideal life led by Ruedeger in Bechlarn, adding that if he were a king he would choose the nobleman's daughter for his wife. Ruedeger's reaction to these words of praise further disproves Weber's contention that the hero has an exaggerated desire for honor:

> Dô sprach der marcgrave: "wie möhte daz gesîn,
> daz immer künec gerte der lieben tohter mîn?
> wir sîn hie ellende, beide ích und mîn wîp:
> waz hülfe grôziu schoene der guoten juncvrouwen lîp?" (1676)

These are words of humility and in no way reflect belief on Ruedeger's part that he is worthy of such an honor. Gernot politely contradicts him, and Hagen suggests that Ruedeger's daughter would be the appropriate bride for Giselher - a suggestion to which the Burgundian kings willingly consent (1681). The couple is officially betrothed and the "Hochzeit im Ring" takes place, thereby establishing familial ties between Ruedeger and the Burgundians.

When the guests'departure date arrives, Ruedeger assures them that they are most welcome to remain longer. In response to Dancwart's objections that Ruedeger must surely be unable to feed such a massive retinue, Ruedeger states that he can supply them with sufficient food

for fourteen days, because Etzel has seldom made financial demands on him (1690). Ruedeger is most willing to share what he has with his guests; Etzel has been generous to him, and he, in turn, wishes to be generous to others. Despite the fact that the Burgundians wish to reach Etzel's court as soon as possible, Ruedeger is able to persuade them to remain with him three days longer:

> Um die Gastfreundschaft des Markgrafen zu ehren, stellen die Nibelungen selbst die Sorge um die eigene Sicherheit zurück, die durch ein zu spätes Eintreffen bei Etzel gefährdet ist. Die fürstliche Freigebigkeit Rüdigers, die alles Bisherige übertrifft, läßt keinen Gedanken an das bevorstehende Unheil aufkommen. (Splett, p. 64)

The remainder of the episode focuses almost exclusively on Ruedeger's display of milte. During the three remaining days of the visit, Ruedeger lavishes his goods upon his guests: "dô wart dâ getân/ von des wirtes milte daz verre wart geseit." (1691, 2f.) As the guests prepare for departure, the poet again refers to Ruedeger's extraordinary liberality: "Rüedegêr der kunde vil wênic iht gesparn/ vor der sîner milte. swes iemen gerte nemen,/ daz versagete er niemen . . . . " (1692, 2ff.) He bestows "ein wâfenlîch gewant" upon Gunther (1695), which the king graciously accepts despite the fact that he, as a ruler, is accustomed to giving rather than receiving gifts. Gunther's acceptance is a highly unusual gesture; it fittingly conveys his deep respect for the giver. Gernot receives a weapon from Gotelint - the same weapon with which he later slays Ruedeger. But the most meaningful gift is the one which Hagen requests: the shield of Nuodung. In addition to being a valuable object, the shield is a concrete reminder of a

slain relative of the couple and thus has great sentimental value, as Gotelint's tears testify. It, too, is given away without the slightest hesitation (1698-1701). All these gifts, the poet assures us, would never have come into the hands of the Burgundians "wan durh des wirtes liebe" (1704, 3); it is thus very clear that Ruedeger's milte is the expression of his friendship for and good will towards his guests, i.e., the expression of "rîcher muot". As a final gesture of good will, Ruedeger decides to accompany the Burgundians to Etzel's realm and to assure them safe conduct. He thereby undertakes the legal obligation to protect them from harm; this obligation assumes major significance later in the epic.

Ruedeger plays only a minor role in the activities which surround the arrival of the Burgundians at Etzel's court and in the growing conflict between them and the Huns. His final major appearance occurs in the thirty-seventh aventiure, after a great deal of blood has already been shed. When he arrives at the court after having learned of the countless battles which have occurred and of the burning of the hall in which the Burgundians were sheltered, he succumbs to tears (2135). Witnessing this sight, one of the Huns complains to Kriemhild that the ungrateful Ruedeger has not yet fought on behalf of his lord, intimating at the same time that Ruedeger is a coward. Upon hearing these accusations, the angry hero strikes the man dead. Wapnewski describes Ruedeger's action as "der rabiate Akt des Faustrechts" and regards it as one of several features carried over from an older version of the epic (Wapnewski, p. 403); and Weber maintains that the slaying serves to

unmask the true character of the hero, who cannot bear such an affront to his highly-coveted honor: "Wie gewaltig Rüedegers höfischer Ehrgeiz, sein weltlicher Geltungsdrang ist, zeigt später blitzartig die Szene der Erschlagung des Hunnen . . . . " (Weber, p. 101) Both interpretations, however, are inconsistent with the true nature of the character as we have come to know him thus far. The explanation offered by Splett is more accurate: The scene reveals in a drastic manner that Ruedeger has not refrained from fighting because of cowardice or ingratitude; it is intended instead to dramatize the conflict in which Ruedeger has become involved. (Splett, p. 76)

After the slaying of the Hun, the intensity of Ruedeger's conflict indeed becomes apparent. Ruedeger feels compelled to prove that he is innocent of the accusation of the Hun. He does so by reminding everyone present that because he had given the Burgundians safe conduct, it would be unlawful for him to fight against them (2143). Kriemhild does not dispute his statement but reminds him instead of his obligations to Etzel and of his oath to her: "'ir woldet durch uns wâgen die êre und ouch daz leben.'" (2148, 3) Ruedeger acknowledges that he has indeed sworn to risk "êre" and "lîp" on their behalf; but he adds that he has not promised to lose his soul on their account (2150, 1ff.). He fears that his salvation is at stake, because in order to keep his oath he would have to violate his obligations to the Burgundians: "'zuo dirre hôhgezîte brâht' ich die fürsten wol geborn.'" (2150, 4) When Etzel and Kriemhild throw themselves at his feet and beg for his help, his dilemma becomes even more acute:

"Owê mir gotes armen, daz ich ditz gelebet hân.
aller miner êren der muoz ich abe stân,
triuwen unde zühte, der got an mir gebôt.
owê got von himele, daz mihs niht wendet der tôt!"
(2153)

These words, which express Ruedeger's feelings of helplessness and uncertainty in the face of mounting disaster, indicate that he experiences an acute crisis of conscience. The êre of which he speaks is far more than his external honor and recognition in the sight of men; it includes his inner honor and integrity as well. Ruedeger fears that no matter what he does, he will have made a morally wrong decision and thus have jeopardized his salvation:

"Swelhez ich nu lâze unt daz ander begân,
sô hân ich boeslîche und vil übele getân:
lâze aber ich si beide, mich schiltet elliu diet.
nu ruoche mich bewîsen der mir ze lebene geriet."
(2154)

Contrary to Weber's interpretation of these lines, Ruedeger's words do not prove that his greatest concern is the loss of his honor in the sight of the world, especially since the phrase "elliu diet" refers not to the whole world but only to the two parties involved in the conflict, both of which have legally binding claims to his loyalty.[38] Ruedeger's statement is instead the expression of his keen awareness of the full range of implications involved in his dilemma - implications which, in addition to everything else, also include the welfare of his soul.

In a final effort to avoid the hopeless situation in which he has become enmeshed, Ruedeger offers to return to Etzel all that he has ever received from him:

"her künec, nu nemt hin widere al daz ich von iu hân,
daz lant mit den bürgen: des sol mir niht bestan.
ich wil ûf mînen füezen in daz ellende gân."
(2157, 2ff.)

Wapnewski rightly observes "daß es sich bei diesem Ausbruch um den Akt der diffidatio, der Absage handelt. Rüdiger kündigt Lehen und Lehnspflicht und Lehnsrecht auf!" (Wapnewski, p. 390) Etzel's response, however, reveals that such a solution is unacceptable: "'wer hülfe danne mir?'" (2158, 1) Ruedeger cannot take such a step at precisely the moment when his lord most needs him; to do so would be morally reprehensible, even if Etzel were to agree to Ruedeger's proposal. Etzel's words clarify Ruedeger's moral dilemma and make him aware of the right course of action. After further consideration of all that is at stake, Ruedeger briefly but clearly expresses his realization of the validity of Etzel and Kriemhild's claim to his help: "'ich muoz iu leisten als ich gelobet hân.'" (2166, 3) The decision is a painful one. Ruedeger laments the fate of his friends (2166, 4) and he departs "vil trûreclîchen" from Etzel (2167); but despite his grief, he has chosen the only moral course of action.[39]

As Ruedeger approaches the Burgundians to do battle with them, he formally severs the legal ties which bind him to his friends. The severing of the legal bond is conveyed by the poet's statement "dô muos' er sînen friunden versagen dienest unde gruoz" (2174, 4), and by Ruedeger's words to the Burgundians: "'ê do wâren wir friunde: der triuwen wil ich ledec sîn.'" (2175, 4) As Splett observes:

> Die Rechtsbegriffe ledec sin und versagen zeigen an, daß ihn nicht nur unverbindliche Freundschaft

> mit den Burgunden verbindet, sondern daß er ihnen gegenüber rechtliche Verpflichtungen übernommen hat. Sonst wäre es nicht nötig, diese eigens zu widerrufen. (Splett, p. 92)

At first Gunther cannot believe that Ruedeger intends to fight against him, but the nobleman repeats what he had earlier said to Etzel and Kriemhild: "'Jane mâc ichs niht gelâzen,' sprach dô der küene man:/ 'ich muoz mit iu strîten, wande ihz gelobt hân.'" (2178, lf.) These words reaffirm his moral obligation to fight on Etzel's behalf. Ruedeger cannot be persuaded to change his mind, despite the attempts of the Burgundian kings to appeal to the bonds of friendship, kinship and law which have bound them together, because Etzel's claim to his loyalty takes precedence.

As the fighting is about to begin, a remarkable thing happens. Hagen steps forward and requests the shield that Ruedeger is carrying. He states that the shield of Nuodung which he had received from Gotelint has been destroyed in battle by the Huns, and that if he were to have Ruedeger's shield, he would need no other protection in the confrontation which is about to begin (2194-95). In order to understand the significance of Hagen's gesture, we must recall that Hagen has not always appeared in a favorable light in the epic. It was he who murdered Siegfried, the loyal friend and ally of Gunther, and it was he who later showed no compassion for Kriemhild as he deposited the body before her door after proclaiming his indifference to her reaction to Siegfried's death (1001-02). Although he was portrayed as "ein helflîcher trôst" to the Burgundians in the second part of the work (1526), doing all that he could to assure their welfare and to guaran-

tee them some small measure of happiness, he was never depicted in a thoroughly positive manner. It is only now, as he requests the shield from Ruedeger, that he emerges as a truly magnanimous figure.

By asking for the shield, Hagen is in reality giving two precious gifts to Ruedeger. On the one hand, he gives Ruedeger the opportunity to affirm the latter's very essence. Ruedeger, who has been the epitome of milte throughout his life, now has one final occasion to demonstrate his generosity. On the other hand, he gives the gift of understanding and friendship. His gesture reveals that he understands that Ruedeger is obliged to fight against the Burgundians and that he does so most reluctantly. By allowing Ruedeger to present him with the shield, Hagen is allowing him to express his true feelings of friendship towards the Burgundians. Hagen's gesture is a perfect expression of the attitude of "rîcher muot". It is not rendered "von reht", i.e., according to the dictates of justice and legality, because all the legal bonds between Ruedeger and the Burgundians have already been dissolved. It is, instead, rendered "nâch rehte", above and beyond the dictates of law, in total accordance with the dictates of milte in the truest sense of the word. In the midst of tensions and hostilities, in the midst of a situation which was created by feelings of hatred and revenge, in short, in the midst of all that is antithetical to the spirit of courtliness, Hagen is able to create a situation in which, for one brief moment, all enmity is dissolved and courtliness prevails in its most perfect form.

Ruedeger responds to Hagen's magnanimous gesture with an equal dis-

play of magnanimity of spirit:

"Vil gerne ich dir waere guot mit mînem schilde,
torst' ich dir in bieten vor Kriemhilde.
doch nim du in hin, Hagene, unt trag' in an der hant.
hey soldest du in füeren in der Burgónden lant!"
(2196)

It does not matter to Ruedeger that Kriemhild would disapprove of or misinterpret such a gesture. He gives Hagen the shield as a token of his true feelings not only for the man who had requested the gift but for the Burgundian people as well. Ruedeger is more than the passive hero of whom Wapnewski speaks in his interpretation of this scene. He could refuse to grant Hagen's request, but he chooses the more noble course of action. He gives "nâch rehte" as Hagen had done, thereby affirming the spirit of "rîcher muot" which has always been his predominant characteristic. His decision to fight for Etzel proves that he is just; his decision to grant Hagen's request, in turn, proves that he is more than just. It proves that he is milte. His gesture, far from being a passive one, inspires Hagen to one further act of magnanimity. Upon beholding the willingness which underlies Ruedeger's gesture (2197) - and willing generosity belongs to the essence of milte according to courtly standards[40] - Hagen is moved to tears and declares that he will not fight against Ruedeger:

"Nu lôn' ich iu der gâbe, vil edel Rüedegêr,
swie halt gein iu gebâren dise recken hêr,
daz nimmer iuch gerüeret in strîte hie mîn hant,
ob ir si alle slüeget die von Burgónden lant." (2201)

Although these words cannot be interpreted as a sign that Hagen abandons his lords in order to affirm the bond of friendship which

binds him to Ruedeger (see above, Wapnewski), they do indicate that Hagen abandons unconditional loyalty to his king for the sake of friendship. Nor can it be said that Ruedeger abandons his friends in order to fulfill his duties to Etzel, for his gift to Hagen reveals that in a very real sense he has not abandoned them, even though he is compelled to fight against them. Both men go off to fight on their respective sides, but not without having first revealed their true feelings. The exchange which takes place between the two does not stem the tide of disaster, but in the midst of a hopeless situation it affirms for one short moment all that is good and noble by courtly standards.

From the moment that Ruedeger first appears in the epic, he is portrayed as a noble and magnanimous individual, and he continues to manifest those attributes until the moment of his death. He, like Sigmunt and Etzel, represents the spirit of "rîcher muot" in a most exemplary manner. He, like they, becomes enmeshed in circumstances over which he has little control. It belongs to the tragic nature of the Nibelungenlied that precisely such outstanding individuals are in the end victims of a course of action which is determined by characters who do not share their nobility and magnanimity of spirit.

8. Summary. In our introduction to the Nibelungenlied we noted that the word milte occurred in the epic with even greater frequency than it did in the Arthurian romances which we discussed in the preceding chapter. The word milte commonly appears in the description of courtly festivities and in character depiction; even when the word itself is not used in these situations, the concept of milte is often

clearly implicit. Significantly, however, the type of milte which the author portrays is in many instances the traditional, conventional virtue which we encountered in the literature of the precourtly period rather than the spirit of "rîcher muot". That the author is dealing with "alten maeren" only partially explains this phenomenon. The principal reason for the frequent occurrence of milte in the traditional rather than the more modern sense of the word is found in the nature of the characters. Many of the characters who display this virtue - in fact, those who play the major role in shaping the course of events - merely conform to the external conventions of milte and totally lack an understanding of its underlying spirit.

Gunther, Siegfried and Brunhild are explicitly described as milte, and they display great generosity on appropriate occasions, but they lack the spirit of "rîcher muot". Both Siegfried and Gunther, for example, seek only the fulfillment of their own desires, as demonstrated by their approaches to winning the love of their brides - in Gunther's case, trickery, and in the case of Siegfried, initially at least, "Faustrecht". Brunhild is instrumental in the death of Siegfried, and she is totally indifferent to the anguish of his widow. Kriemhild, who is also described as milte and whose generosity exceeds that of anyone but Ruedeger and Siegfried, exploits milte solely as a tool for revenge. She conforms perfectly to the external conventions of milte; at the same time, she is the incorporation of the absolute perversion of that virtue.

Despite the fact that the spirit of "rîcher muot" is lacking in

four of the major characters, it is found in rich measure in three figures who have less impact on the crucial events of the epic. Sigmunt's milte is not limited to the distribution of gifts at a "hochzît"; it goes beyond the bounds of law and custom and encompasses an extraordinary amount of good will towards the widow of his son, whom he is willing to permit to reign in his kingdom without relinquishing any of her former privileges. Etzel is milte in the traditional sense of the word, but he also manifests the spirit of "rîcher muot". His generosity is known by Christian and heathen alike, and the good will and hospitality which he demonstrates towards the Burgundians serves to underscore his magnanimity of spirit. But the most outstanding example of "rîcher muot" is found in the character of Ruedeger, who by the gift of his shield to Hagen is able to transcend the bonds of legality and, together with Hagen, to create a moment in which the spirit of "höveschеit" and milte overcomes all hatred and hostility. The spirit of "rîcher muot" is indeed present in the Nibelungenlied; the fact that it is present only in the characters who have a smaller impact on decisive events contributes substantially to the tragic outcome of the work.

In our introduction to this chapter we called attention to the correlation between courtliness and milte in the Nibelungenlied. The same characters who observe the form but not the spirit of milte also observe the form but not the spirit of "höveschеit". Gunther and Siegfried's use of deception to win Brunhild is a violation of the basic spirit of courtliness. Brunhild's use of contests of strength as a

means of avoiding an unsuitable partner is somewhat grotesque and certainly not courtly. Kriemhild's willingness to learn the customs of the Hunnish court not for the sake of serving as a model of courtliness but solely in order to gain the support of the Huns for her plans of revenge also violates the spirit of courtliness, as does her total lack of mâze in the pursuit of revenge. Conversely, the characters who are truly milte are also truly courtly. The court of Xanten is a model of "höveschеit" during the reign of Sigmunt, who does his best to instruct his son in the ways of courtliness. Etzel's reception of the Burgundians is characterized by perfect observance of the rules of courtly etiquette. Finally, the twenty-seventh aventiure of the epic, the so-called "Idyll von Bechlarn", proves Ruedeger to be the very epitome of "höveschеit".[41]

The close correlation between "höveschеit" and milte would seem to suggest that milte is an integral part of courtliness, and that unless both flourish, courtly society is threatened with extinction. The correlation would also seem to indicate that the old definitions of courtliness and milte are inadequate for society around the year 1200. Gunther, Siegfried, Brunhild and Kriemhild are "hövesch" in the original sense of the word, i.e., they are members of the aristocracy and belong to the court. But they are certainly not "hövesch" in the way in which the term was understood by the courtly audience for whom the work was written, because they lack certain of the virtues which are essential to true courtliness. Likewise, they are milte in the traditional sense of being generous, but they lack the spirit of

"rîcher muot" which had come to be synonymous with milte. Their failure to adhere to the new ethos led to untold suffering and tragedy; therein lies the didactic message of the author.

B. The Kudrun

In the introduction to this chapter we noted that the Kudrun, like the Nibelungenlied, must be regarded as a courtly heroic epic, despite the assertion of some scholars that the author failed to transform his "Stoff" into a work in which the spirit of "höveschеit" was a dominant force. Since the turn of the century, literary scholars have dealt in depth with the influence of the Nibelungenlied on the Kudrun, and many have called attention to the striking similarity in the treatment of courtly elements in both works. Emil Kettner, for example, makes the following observation:

> Mit sachlichen und sprachlichen Entlehnungen aus dem Nibelungenliede sind am stärksten durchsetzt diejenigen Teile der Gudrun, welche typische Vorgänge beschreiben, also Bericht gegen über Prinzenerziehung, Feste, Empfang, Abschied, Botschaft, Werbung, Schenken, Kampf.[42]

Werner Hoffmann also stresses the impact of the Nibelungenlied on the treatment of courtliness in the Kudrun:

> Daß das Nibelungenlied in besonders starkem Maße auf die 'Kudrun' gewirkt hat, ist schon früh bemerkt worden, und es sind - auch dies ist keine neue Erkenntnis - gerade die höfischen Züge, in deren Entfaltung sich der 'Kudrun'-Dichter an das Nibelungenlied angelehnt hat.[43]

While these observations are certainly correct, they have been used as the basis for drawing further conclusions which are somewhat dubious.

This is particularly true of certain conclusions which have been reached by Hoffmann.

Hoffmann argues that although the courtly elements of both works are depicted in a similar fashion, they serve radically different functions in each. In regard to the Nibelungenlied he states:

> Das Höfische ist im Nibelungenlied nicht bloß Zeitkolorit, sondern es ist jene Macht, deren Unzulänglichkeit der Dichter dartun will. Und eben um zeigen zu können, daß die Werte und Ideale des Rittertums, die er durchaus als solche erkannte und anerkannte, und die höfische Welt der Härte der Wirklichkeit nicht standhalten können, sondern der Zerstörung anheimfallen, hat der Nibelungendichter das Bild des Höfischen zunächst einmal so breit aufbauen und ausmalen lassen.[44]

He goes on to note that "das Höfische" does not function in the same way in the Kudrun, because there, instead of being destroyed, it endures and shines forth at the end of the work:

> Immanent hat der Dichter, indem er dem Höfischen nicht nur einfachhin Bestand zuerkennt, sondern die Dichtung sogar in einem glanzvollen höfischen Feste ausklingen läßt, der Untergangsvision des Nibelungendichters sein Bekenntnis entgegengesetzt, daß Rittertum und höveschеit zuletzt sich bewähren, sich als tragfähig erweisen, daß sie eine gültige, beständige Lebensordnung konstituieren können.[45]

Hoffmann, like many scholars before him, concludes that the author of the Kudrun wrote his epic in a conscious attempt to provide his audience with an antithesis to the Nibelungenlied. He maintains that the antithesis is to be found not only in the basic optimism of the Kudrun poet, whose work ends in harmony and joy rather than in the sorrow and total devastation of the Nibelungenlied, but also in the poet's view of courtliness. The Kudrun, he asserts, has a positive view of courtliness. It offers its audience a "nicht in Frage gestellte, nicht

skeptisch bezweifelte Bild des höfischen Rittertums" as does the Nibelungenlied.[46]

Although Hoffmann is correct in stressing the fact that the Kudrun is in many respects antithetical to the Nibelungenlied, the crucial difference between the two works does not lie in the opposite view of courtliness held by the authors. Both poets are convinced of the validity of courtliness and of courtly values. The difference lies in the way in which they demonstrate their conviction. We must reiterate that the author of the Nibelungenlied, far from wishing to show the inadequacy of courtliness, seeks to demonstrate that the mere adherence to the external conventions of "höveschеit" is insufficient. He depicts a society in which those conventions are for the most part perfectly upheld; but the underlying spirit is absent, and that fact contributes substantially to the tragic ending. The author of the Kudrun, in stark contrast, portrays a society in which the spirit of "höveschеit" and of all the courtly virtues - milte in particular - ultimately prevails; thus the work ends happily.

The Kudrun deals with the events of three generations; significantly, it is the third and youngest generation which manifests the spirit of courtliness and of milte. Although the attribute of milte is ascribed to many members of the two older generations, we find no evidence that they are indeed milte, except in the traditional sense of the word. It is only in the third generation, principally in the persons of Hartmut and Kudrun, that the attitude of "rîcher muot" is a prime motivating force. In an interesting inversion of normal circumstances, it is the younger generation which imparts wisdom to

its elders by teaching them the true meaning of courtliness and of milte. Because milte has different meanings and is exercised differently as we move from the older generations to the youngest one, we will consider its meaning and function in each of the three generations.

1. The first generation. The Kudrun begins, as it ends, with an extraordinary display of milte at a typical courtly celebration. Although the function of the celebration is to set into motion the plot involving Hagen, the festivities also serve to reveal the importance of milte as a conventional courtly virtue. The host of the festivities is Sigeband. He is initially described as milte (20,4)[47], but it soon becomes apparent that he has been remiss in exercising that virtue, for his wife approaches him with the complaint that although he is an extremely wealthy ruler, she has seldom seen him among the assembly of his knights celebrating with them and distributing his riches to them. She reproaches him for his failure to be generous and reminds him of the necessity of doing so:

> "Ez ist an rîchen fürsten harte kranker muot,
> die zesamene bringent âne mâze guot,
> ob siz mit <...> recken niht willeclîchen teilen.
> die si ûz stürmen bringent, tiefe wunden, wie sol
> man die heilen?" (32)

Sigeband acknowledges the validity of her reproach and most willingly accepts her suggestion to invite his subjects to a "hochzît". Milte plays a major role in the festivities as the guests receive abundant gifts from the royal couple (34; 40ff.; 46). Even when the abduction of Hagen brings the celebration to an abrupt and sorrowful conclusion, the king and queen do not allow their grief to prevent them from

displaying generosity. As the guests depart, they are given countless treasures as an expression of the good will of their hosts (63f). Among the gifts is "silber ungewegen" (65, 3), a phrase which suggests unlimited largesse. By means of lavish giving, Sigeband restores his honor in the eyes of the world - honor which had been impaired by his reluctance to exercise the virtue of milte.

The description of the display of milte at the celebration is reminiscent of the generosity which was shown to the guests at Siegfried's "Schwertleite". It also calls to mind similar descriptions in works of precourtly and early courtly literature, primarily because the type of milte exercised here is the traditional rather than the more modern concept of the virtue. Sigeband exhibits great liberality on two further occasions. For the love of his son he is extremely generous to his former enemy, the Graf von Garade (164), and at the "Schwertleite" of Hagen he willingly grants his guests whatever they wish (174). In each of these instances, as on the occasion of the "hochzît", Sigeband proves himself to be a generous ruler who conforms in a most perfect way to the expectations of a man of his high stature. His conduct exemplifies the conventional definition of milte.

Hagen, like his father, is also depicted as the incorporation of the traditional virtue of milte. He is known for this virtue even when he is a young man who has not yet celebrated his "Schwertleite": "er wart sô rehte milte daz es niemen möhte wol getrouwen." (165, 4) As the day of his initiation into knighthood draws near, the author foreshadows Hagen's future acts of liberality: "sît wart sîn groziu

milte harte wol befunden." (172, 3) That Hagen merits the epithet milte is seen as he distributes clothing and treasure to the guests who participate in the celebration of his "Schwertleite" (190) and again later when he generously shares with his people the countless gifts which he has received from Hetel's men instead of keeping them for himself (299; 309). Hagen is extraordinarily generous to the alleged exiles from Hetel's realm, offering to share his land with them and to give them ten times as many goods as Hetel had taken away from them (316). Moreover, when the men prepare to depart, he offers them horses, clothing, gold and precious gems not only for the sake of his honor ("'ich sol iu alsô gelten/ iuwer grôze gâbe, daz mich die liute darumbe iht dürfen schelten.'", 433, 3f.), but also out of feelings of genuine friendship and love as well as regret at losing their company:

> Her Hagene sprach zen gesten: "wie lât ir mîniu lant?
> alle mîne sinne ich dar zuo hête gewant,
> wie ich iu geliebte mîn lant und mîn rîche.
> nu welt ir hinnen scheiden unde lât mich ungesellic-
> lîche." (431)

Although Hagen is explicitly characterized as milte, and although he displays great generosity on appropriate occasions, at no time does he behave in a manner which demonstrates that he also possesses the attribute of "rîcher muot". While it is true that we also find no evidence that Sigeband manifests this attribute, it must be noted that his role in the epic is far more limited and that he never appears in a situation which would serve to illustrate whether or not he is milte according to the definition of the courtly era. The author

devotes more attention to Hagen, and he depicts him in situations which serve as a test of his true character. Hagen indeed exercises milte throughout his lifetime, but he is also characterized as "vâlant aller künige" (168). Moreover, the attribute most frequently associated with his name - it appears thirty-six times - is "wild".[48] It is clear that such epithets are antithetical to the spirit of "rîcher muot".

There is a decided change in Hagen's character as the epic progresses. Although the hero is depicted as an exemplary and admirable individual both in his childhood and in his youth, his later conduct is at times less than praiseworthy. Hagen's change in character is most clearly seen if we consider the incident which best typifies his youthful conduct and if we compare that incident to his later behavior. When Hagen is taken prisoner by the Graf von Garade, he has already magically acquired the strength of twelve men (103ff.). He does not immediately use his strength against his captor, however, but behaves instead in a reasonable and conciliatory manner. After pointing out that he has played no role in the hostilities which exist between the nobleman and Sigeband, he promises to effect a reconciliation between them and to richly reward the nobleman and his followers if they take him safely to his father (131; 133). It is only when Garade continues to insist upon using him as a hostage that Hagen becomes angry and, as a last resort, responds to force by throwing thirty of his captor's men overboard (136). By doing so, he is able to compel Garade to take him home to Ireland. When Hagen

is reunited with his father, he willingly keeps his promise, despite the way in which he was treated by the nobleman:

> . . . nach wie vor ist Hagen bereit, zwischen seinem Vater und dem Grafen von Garade zu vermitteln. Zwar habe er nicht die Macht im Lande, aber versuchen werde er es auf jeden Fall (140, 2-4). Es zeigt sich, wie genau und rechtlich Hagen abzuwägen versteht. Sein Zorn wächst nicht ins Maßlose und sein Selbstbewußtsein auch nicht.[49]

The scene which depicts Hagen's homecoming contrasts vividly to a similar scene in the Nibelungenlied in which Gunther returns home after having won Brunhild. Gunther is so immersed in his own happiness that he totally forgets to keep his promise to Siegfried to give him Kriemhild as his bride. His own good fortune takes precedence over a promise made to the friend to whom he owes his entire happiness. Hagen, on the other hand, does not selfishly allow the joy of his homecoming to make him forget his promise to a man who was initially his enemy. The scene concludes with the following description of the young Hagen: "er was in sînen jungen jâren wîse." (162, 4) Both the words of the poet and the conduct of Hagen himself reveal that the youth has the potential to become a great and magnanimous ruler and to develop the attribute of "rîcher muot".

When Hagen becomes king, he is at first known above all for his justice and for his goodness towards the poor (194f.). As soon as his daughter Hilde reaches marriageable age, however, the vice of Übermuot becomes his predominant characteristic (201). Hagen is unwilling to give his daughter to any suitor;[50] moreover, the man who had once been able to moderate his anger towards his enemy and to treat him justly now behaves in a thoroughly immoderate and blood-

thirsty manner towards anyone who would threaten to rob him of his daughter. The following words reveal the fittingness of the epithets "vâlant aller künige" and "wild" with which the poet describes Hagen:

> Boten hiez er hâhen wol zweinzic oder mêr
> - die ez niht gerechen mohten, den was ez herzen sêr -,
> alle die man sande nâch sîner tohter hêre.
> genuoge, den man ez sagete, die gerten ir ze wîbe
> nimmer mêre. (202)

When Hilde is later taken away by Hetel's men, Hagen again appears as "der wilde". He speaks "⟨rehte⟩ grimmeclîche" as he announces his intention to kill with his own hands any of the captors who comes within his reach (447). Even when Morunc warns him against acting in haste, Hagen cannot be restrained. He seizes his weapons and sets out "vil grimme" (451, 4) in pursuit of the captors with every intention of annihilating them: "er wolte si alle slahen unde hâhen." (452, 4) When Hagen reaches Hetel and his men, he goes forward "in grôzem zorne" (503, 1) to fight against them. He wounds both Hetel and Wate, and it is only after he is seriously injured that he agrees to Hetel's request to put an end to the fighting.

It is, of course, true that "der wilde Hagene" possesses a number of attributes which counterbalance the portrait of him as "vâlant aller künige". Having made peace with Hetel, he willingly agrees to see his daughter, and his words to her are laden with paternal affection (538). Moreover, he gladly accompanies her to her new kingdom and he fully accepts Hetel as his son-in-law. Hagen is quick to anger and immoderate in pursuit of revenge in his later years, but at the same time - and therein lies the difference between

him and his counterparts in the Nibelungenlied - he is also relatively quick to forgive and to be reconciled with his adversaries.

Hagen is essentially portrayed as a hero of a bygone era whose character has been modified in such a way that he does not possess the harshness and one-sidedness of many of the typical heroes of the heroic genre. He is an admirable figure according to the ethos of earlier generations, and he is also a more courtly individual than are corresponding figures in the Nibelungenlied, who relentlessly and often ruthlessly pursue their goals to the bitter end. But Hagen is still not fully representative of the ethos of the courtly era. He allows himself to be reconciled with Hetel only after he has fought vehemently against him, and it is primarily Hetel's power and wealth rather than Hagen's innately noble and magnanimous disposition which makes it easier for him to accept his son-in-law without bearing him a grudge (544). Hagen is milte in the conventional sense of the word, but he does not possess the attribute of "rîcher muot". In this respect he is not unlike the members of the following generation.

2. The second generation. Hetel, like Hagen, possesses the conventional virtue of milte. He reigns over seven kingdoms, and we are repeatedly reminded of his riches and power by the epithet "rîch" which appears in conjunction with his name more often than any other word. Hetel uses his vast wealth in a way which clearly calls to mind the "spielmännische Freigebigkeit" which played an integral role in König Rother. His situation parallels that of Rother in a number of ways. We must recall that Rother's messengers were impri-

soned by Constantine when they sought to win the latter's daughter for their lord. Thus Rother traveled to the kingdom of his beloved disguised as an alleged exile from his own realm. Upon arrival, he used his enormous riches to impress Constantine's people, to win their favor and to demonstrate his êre. For Hetel as for Rother, milte is part of the list by means of which he wins his bride. Although he himself does not go to Hagen's kingdom, he sends his men as alleged exiles from his realm, providing them with abundant treasures to display at the court of Ireland. When his men arrive, they immediately win Hagen's good will and assure their own welfare by presenting the king with costly gifts (297ff.; 306ff.). Their generosity is without limits, and it brings them the honor which they seek, just as it had brought to Rother:

> Swaz aber iemen sagete von den küenen man,
> von Waten und von Fruoten, waz dâ wart getân,
> der milte was noch mêre dan sîn iemen möhte getrouwen.
> si wurben vaste umb êre. daz sagete man ze hóve den
> schóenen frouwen. (326)

When the poet says of Hetel's men "des ⟨künic⟩ Hagenen geste wâren milte" (303, 4), he is clearly referring to the type of milte common to the "Spielmannsepen" with which he was thoroughly familiar.

Although Hetel uses milte as part of a list to win his bride, he does not exercise this virtue solely for the sake of his own advantage. Hetel is generous almost to the point of frivolity towards his own men: "der künic leiste gerne swes man an in gerte./ des Fruote einez wolte, der künic in iecliches wol drizic werte." (280, 3f.) He genuinely cares about the fate of those who undertake the journey to

Ireland, and he willingly gives them rich gifts as a token of his concern for them (278; 281). Moreover, at the celebration of his marriage to Hilde, he greatly alleviates the poverty of his less fortunate guests (550). In addition, he is so generous to the people of Ireland that they, like the recipients of Siegfried's generosity in the Nibelungenlied, are unable to carry home all their newly-acquired wealth. By means of his liberality Hetel wins their friendship and also increases the honor of his bride in the eyes of her kinsmen (551f.). As Hoffmann notes, Hetel's milte serves to enhance his portrayal as a thoroughly positive figure:

> Wenn an Hetel die Eigenschaft der milte, als ein Zeichen seines Reichtums, aber auch als ein Ausdruck der Verbundenheit mit den Seinen, so sehr hervorgehoben wird, dann rückt damit die Gestalt des jungen Königs auch unter diesem für die Zeit so wichtigen Aspekt in ein günstiges Licht.[51]

After his marriage to Hilde, Hetel continues to rule in an exemplary manner, just as Hagen had done in the early years of his reign. But when his daughter comes of marriageable age, he reacts to her suitors in much the same way that Hagen had reacted to the suitors of Hilde. Although he does not have them hung as Hagen had done, he rejects their offers for the same reason that had prompted Hagen to do so: hôchgemüete (585, 1). It is this attitude alone which prompts him to turn away Siegfried von Morlant. The messengers of Hartmut are dealt with in a thoroughly uncourtly manner ("daz si nâch minne füeren, dô hêt man si vil smaehe", 606, 4), and they are even threatened by Hetel (608). Herwig meets with a similarly discourteous treatment: "hête er tûsent stunde eins tages dar gesant,/ er vunde

dâ niht anders wan hôchvart ⟨und⟩ versmâhen." (631, 2f.) Moreover, when Hetel is attacked by Herwig, he fights "grimmes muotes" just as Hagen had earlier fought against him (645, 1). But he, too, is ultimately willing to be reconciled with his son-in-law without bearing a grudge.

Hetel is depicted as a somewhat more courtly figure than Hagen. Unlike his father-in-law, he does not receive epithets such as "wild" and "vâlant aller künige", and his treatment of his daughter's suitors is more moderate. Nevertheless, he is not a thoroughly courtly individual. He, as Hagen before him, is a representative of the ethos of an earlier heroic age whose character is somewhat modified according to the standards and values of the courtly era. Hetel is indeed an admirable figure, but his virtues, including the virtue of milte, are the traditional ones. We find no evidence that he possesses the attribute of "rîcher muot". He is a magnanimous host, and he is generous without limits to his subjects as an expression of his care and concern for them. These demonstrations of milte, however, in no way differ from those found primarily in precourtly and early courtly literature.

The depiction of Hilde with regard to the virtue of milte parallels that of her husband. The author explicitly describes her as "diu edele und diu milde" (491, 2), and we see evidence of this virtue when she repays the pilgrims whose ships had been confiscated by Hagen thrice the amount of which they had been deprived (932f.). That she does not manifest the attribute of "rîcher muot" will become evident later, when we compare her attitude to that of her daughter.

3. The third generation. In accordance with the spirit of the times during which the Kudrun was written, the members of the older generations whom we have considered thus far are depicted in a somewhat more courtly mode than their counterparts in the Nibelungenlied. At the same time, however, they are not fully representative of the ideals and values of the courtly era. As we noted above, it is principally in the third generation that the true spirit of courtliness and of milte is fully unfolded in the persons of Hartmut and Kudrun. Although it is clear that Kudrun epitomizes the highest ideals of the courtly period, it is somewhat more difficult to demonstrate that Hartmut also upholds courtly values. One of the special merits of Roswitha Wisniewski's study on the Kudrun is the way in which it brings into focus the nobility of both characters.

In an attempt to determine whether or not the Kudrun is an heroic epic, Wisniewski makes the following accurate observation about the title heroine:

> Wo liegt . . . das heroische Element? Es liegt darin, daß eine Frau bereit ist, ihre Menschenwürde um keinen Preis zu verkaufen, daß sie als Königin lieber den niedrigsten Magddienst auf sich nimmt, der ihre Würde nicht verletzen kann, als sich durch eine unehrenhafte Hingabe irgendwelche materiellen Vorteile zu verschaffen.[52]

Wisniewski further observes that we see in Kudrun not only those traits which compel her to assume an heroic posture but also those which enable her to respect her enemy, to grant forgiveness, and to act in a conciliatory manner. These traits, she notes, are modern and unheroic, and they arise from the basically Christian attitude of courtly culture.[53]

Significantly, Wisniewski sees in Hartmut the "Typus des ebenbürtigen Feindes, . . . der selbst die Achtung vor seinem Gegner bewahrt und dem gerade dadurch die Achtung des Gegners zuteil wird."[54] While it would be wrong to underestimate the extraordinary ability of Kudrun to forgive those who have harmed her and to manifest towards them the attitude of "rîcher muot", so, too, would it be incorrect to overlook Hartmut's generous and courtly conduct towards Kudrun. It is precisely by means of such conduct that he shows her the honor and respect of which Wisniewski speaks. Moreover, it is because of such behavior that he merits forgiveness at the end of the work. We can also say that it is not only Kudrun's intrinsically noble nature but also Hartmut's courtly conduct which impels the heroine to mercifully intervene on his behalf. In order to best understand how each of these individuals manifests the spirit of "höveschеit" and of milte, we must examine their conduct and compare it to that of other figures who also play a major role in the third part of the epic.

When Hartmut first appears at the court of Hetel to woo Kudrun, he is depicted as a thoroughly courtly individual. He stands before Hilde "in sînen hôhen zühten" (622, 2), i.e., as the model of good breeding and proper courtly conduct. He is not only handsome - an external trait which, as we know, reveals an inner attitude - but "milte unde küene" as well (623, 2). He himself has undertaken the task of wooing Kudrun because his messengers had been sent away with a negative answer. That he also possesses the attribute of mâze is demonstrated by the fact that he did not act angrily and hastily in

the face of rejection but instead waited for years before once again attempting to accomplish his objective (617, 1). It is only when Kudrun refuses his offer of marriage that he decides to avenge the shabby treatment which his messengers had earlier received from Hetel and to win the maiden despite her rejection (627f.).

Hartmut's decision to raise an army and to win Kudrun by force is explained in part by the fact that the love of Kudrun is his overriding concern from the moment that he first appears in the epic: "ein künic der hiez Hartmuot; nâch ir wante er sîne minne sêre." (587, 4) The significance of these words is aptly expressed by Hoffmann:

> Was schon in dem ersten Verse anklingt, der von ihm erzählt, wird sein Bild in der ganzen Dichtung bestimmen: die Liebe zu Kudrun. Sie ist das Movens für all seine Handlungen; das zentrale Geschehen des Romans baut sich auf ihr auf, genauer: auf den Folgen, die sich aus der Zurückweisung seines Werbens ergeben.[55]

It is primarily Hartmut's great love for Kudrun which prompts him to be stubborn and unyielding. His stubbornness as well as his decision to use force in order to attain his goal reflects a basic flaw in his otherwise thoroughly courtly character. But that flaw is at least partially excused by the author, who reveals that it is Gerlint who encourages her son's determination to win the love of Kudrun by whatever means, be they ethical or not: "Wer Hartmut aber in seinem Vorsatz bestärkt, ja, diesen zunächst überhaupt in ihn hineingesenkt hat und wer Hartmut immer weitertreibt, das ist seine Mutter."[56] When the author first mentions Hartmut's love for Kudrun (see above, 587, 4), he immediately explains the young man's feelings by adding, "Daz riet

im sîn muoter, diu hiez Gêrlint./ dô vólgéte ir lêre der junge voget sint." (588, lf.) Moreover, when Hartmut announces his intent to wage war against Hetel, his announcement is immediately followed by the words, "daz riet im ze allen zîten Gerlínt diu alte vâlentinne." (629, 4) Hartmut's strong ties to his mother and his willingness to accept her morally questionable advice do not completely excuse his uncourtly conduct, but they do serve to shift the largest portion of the blame to Gerlint.

Although Hartmut appears in a negative light when he wages war on Hetel and kidnaps Kudrun, his later conduct reestablishes the positive impression which the reader gained of him when he first appeared at the court of Ireland. When, for example, Ludwig seizes Kudrun by the hair and casts her into the sea for her refusal to marry his son, it is Hartmut who saves her from drowning (961). He is outraged by Ludwig's action and assures him that had anyone other than his own father treated Kudrun in such a manner, he would have put him to death (964). Ludwig acts according to an older ethos: Kudrun's refusal has detracted from his honor (965); hence he avenges the insult in a most abrupt and harsh manner. Hartmut, on the other hand, is willing to be patient with Kudrun. He rescues her not only because he wishes to possess her but also because he is genuinely concerned about her well-being.

Hartmut's concern for the welfare of his beloved as well as his courteous treatment of her is seen repeatedly throughout the years of her imprisonment. Upon arrival in his kingdom, Hartmut takes Kudrun by the hand and leads her to his mother. Kudrun accepts his gesture

only for the sake of abiding by courtly etiquette, but Hartmut behaves courteously towards her out of a genuine desire to serve her: "dô tet ab erz vil gerne unde swaz er dienen kunde mêre." (975, 4) Moreover, he often attempts to console her in her unhappiness (982, 4) He entrusts Kudrun to the care of his mother with words which unequivocally express his desire to assure her well-being:

> "Ich gan iu wol der dinge", sprach dô Hartmuot,
> "swie halt mir gelinge, daz ir die maget guot
> habet in iuwer zühte nâch ir und iuwern êren.
> diu maget ist ellende. frouwe, ir sult si güetlîchen
> lêren." (994; our underlining)

That he wishes to have Kudrun treated well regardless of whether or not he succeeds in winning her love is clear evidence of the attitude of "rîcher muot".

Hartmut is most insistent that his mother attempt to win him the favor of Kudrun by kind and gentle means. Upon noticing Gerlint's anger towards the maiden, he reiterates his original demand that Kudrun be treated beneficently: "'swie das kint gebâre, frouwe, ir sult sîn phlegen/ alsô güetlîche, daz ich⟨s⟩ iu müge gedanken.'" (1001, 2f.) When he returns to his kingdom after the first of several prolonged absences, he observes from Kudrun's thin and wan appearance that she has been mistreated, whereupon he immediately goes to his mother and reminds her of the reason for which he entrusted Kudrun to her care: "'ich hêt ⟨si⟩ iu doch verlân/ ze huote ûf die genâde, daz ir diu grôze swaere/ an aller hande dingen geringét in disem lande waere.'" (1014, 2ff.) In addition, he reminds Gerlint that he is the cause of Kudrun's suffering, thus implicitly stressing their mutual obligation to try to make restitution to the maiden and to do all in

their power to assure her happiness. While Gerlint punishes Kudrun by means of harsh treatment, Hartmut insists upon limiting any punishment to words: "'jâ mac man si mit lîhter rede gesêren.'" (1016, 4) Upon his return from a second absence, he responds to Kudrun's report of abuse at the hands of his mother with heartfelt regret as well as with a promise to compensate for the harm which had been inflicted upon her (1028, 2f.). His words both to his mother and to Kudrun implicitly convey the attitude of "rîcher muot".

The most decisive test of Hartmut's courtliness and of his good will towards Kudrun takes place when she responds to his promise of compensation with a declaration of her lack of trust in him (1028, 4). It occurs to Hartmut that because he is surrounded by his own people, he would be in no danger if he simply used force to have his will of her: "'wer hienge mich dar umbe, ob ich iuch gewünne mir ze einer briute?'" (1029, 4) It is significant that Kudrun need only remind him of his honor and reputation in order to put an end to such ideas:

> "dar zuo ich keine sorge entriuwen nie gewan.
> ez spraechen ander fürsten, sô si des hôrten maere,
> daz daz Hagenen künne in Hartmuotes lande kebese
> waere." (1030, 2ff.)

Kudrun fully realizes that Hartmut is a man of honor and integrity and that he would do nothing to destroy his good name; thus she is fully confident that he will not carry out his threat. She reinforces her appeal to his honor by reminding him of the courtly concept of love, according to which a woman does not marry a man unless both parties seek the union (1034). Hartmut is angered by her words and responds to them with yet another threat, implying that he is now indifferent

to her fate and will arrange to have her returned to her lowly tasks (1035). And yet, when he leaves her, he goes at once to the gentle and compassionate Ortrun to ask her help in putting an end to Kudrun's unhappiness (1038). Because he is a courtly individual and because he sincerely cares about the fate of Kudrun despite her persistent refusal to marry him, he is incapable of carrying out either threat.

It is clear from Hartmut's behavior towards Kudrun as well as from his words to his mother and to Ortrun that his attitude goes far beyond the bounds of conventional courtliness. In his ability to put the welfare of Kudrun above the fulfillment of his most ardent wishes lies the very essence of "rîcher muot". Even when all hope of winning Kudrun's love is destroyed as her kinsmen invade and devastate his realm and as his father lies dead at their hands, Hartmut continues to provide for the maiden's safety and protection. When her life is threatened by Gerlint's henchmen, Hartmut risks his own life and for the second time saves her from certain demise.

That Hartmut is a noble and generous individual is seen again at the end of the work when he appears as a prisoner at the court of Hilde. The author depicts him with the most positive images imaginable for a writer of the courtly era:

> Dô man Hartmuoten sach bî den recken stân,
> mán vant wætlîcher ⟨nie⟩ deheinen man.
> in allen sînen sorgen stuont er in der gebaere,
> als er mit einem pensel ⟨an ein permint⟩wol entworfen waere. (1601)

As he walks through the palace, all who behold him rise as a token of their respect and admiration because, as the poet remarks, "er was

bevollen küene, dar zuo was er ⟨beide⟩ rîch und edele." (1631, 4)
Approaching Kudrun, he tells her truthfully about his feelings regarding the treatment which she received from his mother:

"swaz man iu tet ze leide, daz wâren mîniu sêr.
jâ hiez ez mich alle zîte heln diu frouwe mîne,
daz ichs ⟨niht⟩ erfunde noch mîn vater und al die
helde sîne." (1633, 2ff.)

In addition to proving that he is innocent of the suffering which she was forced to endure, his words also reveal his compassion and concern for her.

As the incorporation of the true spirit of courtliness and milte, Hartmut is clearly a contrast figure to his mother Gerlint, to whom the poet repeatedly ascribes wholly negative epithets. Almost from the time of her first appearance in the work Gerlint is characterized as "diu alte vâlentinne" (629, 4) and as "tiuvelinne" (738, 1; 996, 1; 1066, 3; 1282, 1; 1361, 4; 1381, 1; 1518, 4) or, in an even stronger form, as "diu übele tiuvelinne" (1004, 1; 1320, 3; 1521, 3). Gerlint is also depicted as "wülpinne" (1015, 1; 1052, 1; 1203, 1; 1203, 1; 1280, 1), but the attribute which most frequently appears in conjunction with her name is "übel" (993, 1; 1000, 1; 1024, 3; 1027, 2; 1051, 1; 1054, 1; 1064, 1; 1188, 3; 1194, 4; 1199, 2; 1200, 3; 1266, 2; 1274, 3; 1299, 4; 1516, 1; 1518, 3; 1522, 2). The repeated usage of such unfavorable images reveals the poet's attitude towards Gerlint, and it also reminds the reader that she is the incarnation of evil. Furthermore, if we compare the thoroughly positive characterization of Hartmut to the negative depiction of his mother, it begins to become evident that she rather than her son is the cause of the

suffering which Kudrun is forced to endure - a fact which the text repeatedly confirms.

We noted above that it was Gerlint who urged her son to woo Kudrun (588, 1) and who encouraged him in his intention to raise an army in order to take the maiden by force (629, 4). Her determination to win Kudrun as the bride of her son is partially motivated by her concern for his happiness, but her conduct as well as the words of the poet indicate that her overriding concern is revenge for the insult which Hartmut (and thus his entire realm) received when he was rejected as Kudrun's suitor:

> Des was dâ vil genoete diu alte Gêrlint,
> wie si daz rechen möchte, daz Hetele sîn kint
> versagete smâhelîche ir sune Hartmuoten.
> si wunschte, daz sie hâhen solten beide Waten unde
> Fruoten. (737)

It is she rather than Ludwig who sets into motion the planned attack on Hetel's kingdom, promising a rich reward to anyone who is willing to participate in the plan (738). In contrast to her son, Gerlint is milte only in the sense that she is willing to be generous towards those who comply with her will.

Gerlint at first seems willing to be generous towards the kidnapped Kudrun. She ist most eager to receive the maiden in a cordial manner (970), and her promise to give her crown to Kudrun as a reward for accepting Hartmut is sincerely meant (990). Significantly, however, her generosity and good will abruptly cease when Kudrun refuses to comply with her wishes. As soon as it is clear to Gerlint that Kudrun has no intention of marrying Hartmut, she decides to undertake

the "education" of the maiden; it is not coincidental that the attribute "übel" appears for the first time in connection with her name as she announces that decision (993).

Gerlint's treatment of Kudrun is marked by total lack of compassion as well as by extreme cruelty. In addition to separating her from her companions (998), Gerlint assigns her royal prisoner tasks which are commonly performed by the lowliest handmaiden (996). Moreover, when Hartmut returns home to discover that Kudrun has been mistreated, Gerlint responds to his objections with hypocritical words that are cleverly calculated to allay his worry and to convince him of her honorable intentions towards the maiden. After Hartmut's first reproach to his mother, for example, Gerlint assures him: "'〈ie〉 baz unde baz/ wil ich si haben gerne.'" (1018, 1f.) Her statement is immediately followed by the poet's comment: "dô enweste daz/ niht rehte der recke küene, daz sis in allen ende/ wirs dan dâ vor hête." (1018, 2ff.)

Kudrun begins her imprisonment in the capacity of a chambermaid, but with each successive refusal to marry Hartmut, the harshness of her assigned tasks increases. She is forced to wash clothes from morning until night (1043), and her suffering culminates when she and Hildeburg, her companion in sorrow, are sent barefoot to the river in the freshly-fallen snow (1197ff.). When Kudrun complains that she and Hildeburg will surely die from the cold, Gerlint succinctly reveals her lack of empathy and her total indifference to the fate of the women with the words: "'waz werret ir mir tôte?'" (1203, 4) Upon

discovering later that Kudrun has returned without the clothes, Gerlint calls her insulting and demeaning names and threatens to have her whipped (1278). Only when Kudrun tricks her by declaring that she will marry Hartmut does Gerlint's wrath subside (1286); thus it becomes clear once again that she is capable of behaving in a humane manner only when she attains the fulfillment of her own desires.

Gerlint's cruel and vengeful treatment of Kudrun demonstrates her total lack of the attribute of "rîcher muot". The driving force behind her actions is nothing more than the desire to achieve her goals, coupled with an unbridled lust for revenge when she meets with resistance. Whereas Hartmut is genuinely concerned with the welfare of Kudrun despite the frustration of his wishes, Gerlint is willing to resort to any means to accomplish her objectives. The contrast between Gerlint and her son becomes most apparent when, upon learning of the death of her husband, she offers a large reward to anyone who is willing to murder Kudrun (1471). She thinks only of revenge, while Hartmut risks his life to save the maiden, even though he knows that he will never enjoy her love. In contrast to her son, Gerlint represents the most negative aspects of the ethos of a bygone era. She is depicted as a one-dimensional figure to whom the spirit of courtliness as well as all the values of courtly society are totally alien. Because of her intrinsically evil nature she does not merit salvation at the end of the work, as does Hartmut.

Just as Gerlint stands for everything to which her son is diametrically opposed, so, too, does Kudrun differ dramatically from

her kinsmen and allies of the older generation. We observed above that Kudrun typifies the attitude of the hero or heroine of the heroic genre in that she is willing to make any sacrifice and to endure any humiliation rather than compromise her honor and dignity by accepting Hartmut's offer of marriage; even though her marriage to Herwig has not been consummated, the "Hochzeit im Ring" has taken place, and Kudrun steadfastly refuses to violate the sacred bond which in her mind unites her to her beloved. At the same time, the heroine represents the highest ideals which are so frequently depicted in the courtly epic, for she is able to forgive her enemies and to actively promote their welfare. In this respect she differs from Wate and from her own mother, both of whom are intent not only upon justice but also upon revenge for the wrongs which have befallen Kudrun and thus the entire kingdom.

Kudrun is, of course, just, but she is not bent upon revenge as are Wate and Hilde. On the one hand, she angrily rejects the pleas of Hergart for protection and mercy. Hergart had been unwilling to share the suffering of her mistress because the spirit of courtliness was alien to her. She had bowed to expediency and self-interest by marrying a nobleman at the court of Ludwig, thereby assuring herself of a secure and comfortable existence. Her conduct makes her unworthy of Kudrun's help, and Kudrun justifiably refuses to protect her from Wate:

> Die Erkenntnis des unheroischen Wesens der Gefährtin stürzt Kudrun in Trauer (1094), am Schluß aber erfüllt sie gerechter Zorn, da Hergart über

> die Unfähigkeit zum heroischen Handeln hinaus zum Verrat an den Freunden fähig war, denen zu helfen sie unterließ (1515).[57]

On the other hand, however, Kudrun is also merciful. She willingly and happily places Ortrun under her protection and thus saves her from the raging Wate. It could be argued that Ortrun does not need forgiveness and mercy, because she has never inflicted harm upon Kudrun but has instead consistently sought to console her in her misery. And yet, as Hoffmann observes:

> Dennoch ist Kudruns Haltung gegenüber der normannischen Prinzessin nicht selbstverständlich, sondern bereits Ausdruck einer neuen Auffassung, die in dem anderen den Einzelnen sieht, der nach seiner persönlichen Leistung, nach seinen persönlichen Verdiensten, nach seinem persönlichen Verschulden gewürdigt wird - und dem auch, wenn er schuldig geworden ist, ganz persönlich Gnade zuteil werden kann . . . . Für Hilde ist auch Ortrun schuldig, eben weil sie Angehörige der feindlichen Sippe ist.[58]

Having dealt in the appropriate manner with Hergart and Ortrun, Kudrun then displays an act of mercy which is unparalleled in any other work of medieval German literature: In response to Gerlint's desperate entreaty to be spared from Wate, Kudrun declares: "'ir wârt mir ungenaedic; des müeste ich iu von herzen sîn erbolgen./ Iedoch ⟨stêt⟩ mir dar nâher under diu magedîn.'" (1517, 4f.) Moreover, when Wate demands that Kudrun deliver the evil queen and her associates to him, Kudrun protects them with a beneficent lie: "'der ist deheiniu hie.'" (1520, 1) Kudrun is unable to save Gerlint from Wate, for justice must be carried out. More important than the execution of justice, however, is Kudrun's willingness to protect her most

formidable enemy. Her ability to extend mercy reveals that she embodies the attribute of "rîcher muot" in the broadest sense which the term implies. Although her attitude towards Gerlint must be primarily construed as erbärmde rather than milte, we must recall that mercy was one of the original connotations of milte, and that the attribute of "rîcher muot" is understood as the predisposition to act nobly and generously towards one's fellow man. It is the heroine's capacity to forgive her arch-enemy which ennobles her and reveals her generosity of spirit more than any other action which she performs.

In her capacity for mercy, Kudrun represents a stark contrast to Wate, who is "Träger der germanischen Rache-Ethik".[59] Whereas Kudrun is both just and merciful, Wate is just and vengeful. By putting to death both Hergart and Gerlint, Wate acts as the arm of justice. He is, however, not content to stop with the punishment of the most flagrant evildoers. It was he who struck a blow to Herwig when the latter attempted to persuade him to put an end to the fighting (1490 ff.). Similarly, it was he who slew not only Ludwig's soldiers but innocent men, women and even children in their cradles (1501). By his formidable appearance and his ferocious conduct - "mit grisgramenden zenden", "mit schînenden ougen", "mit bluote . . . berunnen", "sô tobelîche" (1508f.) - he inspires fear even in the very women whom he had come to rescue. Moreover, when victory is assured Wate orders the burning of Ludwig's palace (1535); and when the fighting finally ceases, he longs for further action and can hardly be restrained: "Wate und der küene Fruote wolten noch der schilde mêr zerhouwen." (1544,4)

Hilde, too, adheres to the revenge ethos, although in a more moderate manner as befits her femininity. In the first part of the epic Hilde had been depicted as milte in the traditional sense, and she continues to exhibit that trait. She is most willing to reward those who deserve to be rewarded, as her warm words of welcome to Wate and her acknowledgement of his services reveal (1577). The loyal Hildeburg, too, is assured of Hilde's generosity and unending good will (1585f.). But Hilde's attitude towards the people of Ormanie is initially harsh and unyielding. The queen at first refuses to kiss Ortrun, and it is not until she beholds Kudrun in tears that she promises to reward the princess for having faithfully served her daughter (1581ff.). Moreover, only the tears and pleas of Kudrun and Ortrun can persuade Hilde to abandon her intention of keeping Hartmut imprisoned in her dungeon.

While both Wate and Hilde are at first unwilling to be reconciled with their adversaries, they bow to the wisdom of the younger generation in the end. Their ability to be persuaded to forgive their enemies distinguishes them from their counterparts in the Nibelungenlied, who pursue revenge to the bitter end. Hilde allows Hartmut to appear at court, and with his appearance all enmity is dissolved: "mit vollen wart versüenet der haz, den si dâ truogen,/ daz si des gar vergâzen, daz ir recken ê einander sluogen." (1602, 3f.) Hilde now joyfully turns her thoughts to the coronation of her daughter and to the preparation of a "hochzît", and there is not the slightest indication in the text that she continues to bear the people of Ormanie ill will. She has fully accepted both Ortrun and Hartmut, and peace prevails.

To guarantee that the peace will be unending is all that remains, and that objective is accomplished by means of the marriages at the end of the work.

The significance of the marriages which Kudrun arranges in the thirtieth aventiure has for the most part been adequately discussed in the critical secondary literature[60] and need only be briefly summarized here. By persuading her brother to marry Ortrun, Kudrun not only assures the continued existence of peace between two formerly hostile kingdoms but also provides for the happiness of her brother and rewards Ortrun for help and consolation rendered in time of duress. The marriage which she arranges between Hartmut and Hildeburg also serves more than one purpose. On the one hand, it reveals Kudrun's respect for and forgiveness of her former enemy. We observed that Hartmut was depicted as the "Typus des ebenbürtigen Feindes" and that it was as much his courtly conduct towards Kudrun as the innately noble nature of the heroine herself which impelled Kudrun to intervene on his behalf. By giving Hildeburg to such a noble and courtly individual, Kudrun also provides her faithful companion with the most fitting reward for her loyalty. It is appropriate that the woman who had been willing to share the lowliest and most arduous of tasks with her mistress should now be elevated to the station of queen. Finally, Kudrun persuades Siegfried of Morlant to wed the sister of Herwig. Thus she guarantees peace between Herwig and Siegfried, who had devastated the realm of her beloved, and she also rewards the nobleman for his role in her rescue.

Kudrun's actions at the end of the work have been correctly viewed by literary critics as the ultimate acts of forgiveness and reconciliation. We need only add that these also provide implicit but unequivocal evidence that Kudrun possesses the attribute of "rîcher muot", a spirit which she sustained through greatest hardships. The marriages which she arranges are calculated not only to assure lasting peace and to reward those who are deserving of reward but also to promote the personal happiness and well-being of those involved. When Hartmut expresses his willingness to accept Kudrun's suggestion even before he knows what she intends to propose, he does so with words which clearly express the essence of "rîcher muot": "'ich weiz iuch in den tugenden', sprach dô Hartmuot,/ 'daz ir mir niht râtet wan êre unde guot.'" (1636, 1f.). Furthermore, by having created an atmosphere in which all hostility has been abolished, Kudrun makes possible the festivities with which the work concludes - festivities which show the courtly world at its best and in which the display of milte is the crowning event.

The Kudrun begins with an extraordinary display of milte at a typical courtly celebration, and it ends in the same manner. But there is a strikingly significant difference between the type of milte which is manifested at both events. In the case of the "hochzît" of Sigeband and Ute, milte played the same conventional role which it had so often played in similar festivities described in works of pre-courtly and early courtly literature. The royal couple was expected to lavish gifts upon their guests, and they perfectly conformed to those expectations, thereby increasing their external honor. In the

concluding celebration, milte plays the role which it is expected to play according to the standards of the courtly era. It does not take the place of reht, for justice must be done before milte can occur. Instead, milte follows justice as its perfect culmination. The exercise of milte calls to mind and illustrates the pronouncements of Thomasin on the relationship of milte to reht. First of all, milte comes after reht and crowns it:

> swaz daz reht tuon sol,
> daz zieret dan diu milte wol,
> wan diu milt vert nâch dem reht. (Thomasin, 13653ff.)

Secondly, milte gives more than reht does (Thomasin, 13633). Finally, if it were not for justice, life in society would be impossible; but the life which justice makes possible is made enjoyable and enhanced by milte:

> dâ von verstêt daz ez geschiht
> von dem rehte zaller vrist
> daz ein man bî dem andern ist
> und von der milte geschehen sol
> daz einer sî bî dem andern wol. (Thomasin, 13644ff.)

The final festivities take place in the thirty-first aventiure only after justice has been carried out and after Kudrun, acting as catalyst, has initiated the expression of "rîcher muot" through the arrangement of the marriages. Ludwig is dead, and Gerlint and Hergart have been put to death for their deeds. Furthermore, Hartmut, Ortrun and the other principal figures who deserved reward have been rewarded. Only then do the festivities begin, as Hilde generously provides her guests with elegant clothing (1668). The purpose of the "hochzît" is expressed in the stanza which prefaces the description

of the celebration: "Waz möhte dâ sîn mêre dan freude unde schal?" (1672, 1) The author dedicates no less than fourteen stanzas to a description of the milte which prevails (1673-87). In them, he focuses on the way in which the generosity exhibited there by far exceeds the expectations of the guests, thus implicitly revealing the happiness which milte evokes. He also stresses the willingness with which gifts are given, as if to underscore the courtly conviction that giving can only be construed as milte if it is done willingly and without regret.

All the members of the nobility present distribute gifts and riches without measure. Herwig is the first to do so; he is mentioned as "der milten einer" (1673, 1) who steps forward to increase the joy of those present with gold and other costly treasures. Ortwin vies with him in the exercise of generosity ("si begunden mit der milte strîten", 1675, 4), and Siegfried follows his example. Even the vanquished Hartmut is so magnanimous that it appears as if he has lost nothing during the devastation of his kingdom. The courtliness which Hartmut has manifested in the past is now crowned by the virtue of milte. Kudrun participates in the distribution of wealth, and Wate's generosity even surpasses that which is customarily demonstrated by kings. His willing liberality indicates that he, like Hilde, has put aside all hostility and has entered into the conciliatory and joyous spirit of the occasion.

It is significant that the author concentrates more on milte than on any other aspect of the festivities. The "hochzît" is the culmination of the epic, and milte, in turn, is the culmination of the

"hochzît". In contrast to the Nibelungenlied, which ends in total destruction and without the hope of a future amelioration of affairs, the Kudrun ends on a note of perfect harmony and with the implicit assurance that that harmony will continue to prevail. It is the virtue of milte which serves as the perfect expression of that harmony and which, as the most important aspect of the celebration, makes a major contribution to the depiction of the courtly world in its most perfect state.

4. Summary. The author of the Kudrun presents us with a work in which the meaning and function of two crucial courtly concepts, courtliness and milte, undergo a transformation as we move from the two older generations to the youngest one. In the first two generations, both courtliness and milte mean what they meant and function as they did in precourtly and early courtly literature. The representatives of the older generations exercise milte, often without limits, primarily for the sake of increasing their external honor and providing for the well-being of their subjects. It is only in the third generation that the spirit of courtliness and the attitude of "rîcher muot" come to be predominant forces.

Except for the inclusion of milte as part of a list, the external treatment of that virtue does not differ significantly from its treatment in the Nibelungenlied, because the author depicts it, as well as other aspects of courtly life, in conscious imitation of his predecessor. But although the portrayal of the external conventions of milte in the Kudrun calls to mind similar passages in the Nibelungen-

lied, there are two basic differences between the works with regard to milte as well as courtliness. In the first place, even the characters who are quick to anger and eager for revenge can ultimately be moved to moderate their wrath and to reconcile themselves with their adversaries, whereas their counterparts in the Nibelungenlied persist in the pursuit of revenge to the point of the total destruction of society. While Kriemhild totally lacks the attribute of "rîcher muot", Hilde and Wate can be persuaded to allow that attitude to prevail. In our introduction to this chapter we noted that approximately twenty-five to thirty years separate the two works. The more conciliatory attitude of even the more menacing characters such as Wate and Hagen can be attributed at least in part to the fact that the work was written at a later date, when the courtly audience was thoroughly imbued with the values of the times and thus less receptive to the harshness of corresponding characters from earlier epics and sagas.

Secondly, in the Kudrun it is the will of the youngest and most courtly individuals which prevails in the end, whereas the course of events in the Nibelungenlied is shaped primarily by those who are less noble and less courtly. As a result, the Kudrun ends with the establishment of perfect concord. The characters who shape the crucial events conform to the spirit of courtliness, and they possess the attribute of "rîcher muot", whereas the dominant figures in the Nibelungenlied are courtly and milte only in their external conduct. For both poets the virtue of milte is an integral part of courtliness. One author shows his audience the total devastation which occurs when

milte and courtliness are merely empty conventions, devoid of spirit; the other, in contrast, conveys the perfect harmony which exists when the spirit of both prevails.

C. Conclusions

In the preceding chapter we demonstrated that the concept of milte came to be synonymous with "rîcher muot" in the masterpieces of the Arthurian genre and that the attribute of "rîcher muot" played an important role in character depiction and plot in those works. We also asserted that the new definition of milte was not limited to the realm of Arthurian romance but could be found in other genres as well. Thus the purpose of this chapter was twofold: to determine whether or not the concept of milte was defined in the heroic epic in the same way that it was defined in Arthurian romance, and to ascertain whether or not it played the same important role in character depiction and plot in both genres.

The definition of milte in the heroic epic differs in two respects from its definition in Arthurian romance. First, both in the Nibelungenlied and in the Kudrun milte frequently connotes unlimited generosity when it occurs in its traditional meaning, just as it did in precourtly and early courtly literature. That milte is often synonymous with unlimited giving is explained by the nature of the heroic genre, which deals with alten maeren and thus frequently portrays the characters acting in ways which are more typical of the past than of the courtly present. In the courtly epic, the characters who exercise milte generally do so within the bounds of moderation. The authors of those

works appear to be more conscious of the courtly conviction that all things, including the practice of virtue, must be done moderately. Secondly, the correspondence of milte to "rîcher muot" is for the most part implicit in the heroic epic. Neither in the Nibelungenlied nor in the Kudrun do we find passages similar to those in Hartmann's Erec in which milte is overtly associated with "rîcher muot". Despite this fact, however, it is unmistakably apparent that the new definition of milte is in the consciousness of the authors of the heroic epics which we have considered.

The differences in the definition of milte in the two genres are minimal, and they appear almost insignificant when we consider that they are the only differences and that the concept of "rîcher muot" is as important for the heroic as for the Arthurian genre. Although the word milte continued to be used in both genres in its traditional contexts as a desirable attribute of a lord and as an integral part of courtly festivities, the authors were more concerned with the underlying spirit of the virtue rather than with its external form. Their works reflect the belief that the merely conventional meaning of milte is no longer sufficient. Thus, in the courtly as well as in the heroic epic milte seldom appears as a convenient rhyme word; it has become too important a concept to be used in such a fashion.

The association of milte with "rîcher muot" had a number of important implications in the heroic genre, just as it had in the courtly epic. First of all, the distinction between milte and reht became increasingly apparent, even though the distinction was largely

implicit. We must recall that Ruedeger's gift of the shield to Hagen took place only after all legal ties between the two opposing camps had been severed. Similarly, milte was exercised in the Kudrun only after justice had been executed; it served as the culmination of justice in that work. Secondly, the authors of both the Nibelungenlied and the Kudrun, like their counterparts in the courtly genre, stressed the necessity of giving willingly, thereby reminding their audience that it is not the act of giving itself but the intention which underlies the act that constitutes true milte.

The role of milte in character depiction and plot is as important in the heroic as in the courtly epic. To demonstrate the truth of this assertion, we have only to recall that it was the absence of the spirit of courtliness and of milte in the Nibelungenlied which led to the tragic outcome of the work; conversely, it was the presence of those elements in the Kudrun which, more than anything else, contributed to the happy ending. Moreover, the most noble and admirable characters in both works - Ruedeger in the Nibelungenlied and the title heroine and Hartmut in the Kudrun - were those in whom the attributes of milte and courtliness were the most outstanding traits. It is clear that there is a close correlation between milte and courtliness in both works. The correlation reveals that milte is an integral part of courtliness, and that it is one of many virtues without which the spirit of courtliness cannot exist.

In the preceding chapter we noted that the antithesis of milte, the vice of greed, played a more pronounced role in the courtly epic

than it did in works of precourtly and early courtly literature, and that it was regarded with notable disdain particularly by Wolfram and Gottfried. Greed plays only a minimal role in the heroic epic, primarily because other vices such as Übermuot and immoderation in the pursuit of revenge stand in the foreground. It is failings such as these to which the characters of the heroic epic, by the very nature of the genre, are most susceptible.

Having considered the meaning and function of milte in both the courtly and the heroic epic, we now turn our attention to its occurrence in courtly didactic literature. If, as we have asserted, milte is one of the most important concepts of medieval German thought and if it is an integral part of courtliness, then we can expect that the authors of didactic works will devote considerable effort to formulating a clear and precise definition of the virtue and to elaborating on the role which it is meant to play in courtly society.

CHAPTER V

MILTE IN COURTLY DIDACTIC LITERATURE

In his discussion of the literature written at the height of the courtly period, Helmut DeBoor makes the following significant observation:

> Es ist bezeichnend für die Hochblüte der höfischen Zeit, daß sie keinen reinen Didaktiker hervorgebracht hat. Sie hat ihr Ideal gelebt und gedichtet - sie hat es nicht theoretisch analysiert. Oder wo sie sich theoretisch geäußert hat, geschah es . . . im Rahmen des epischen Kunstwerkes.[1]

It is, of course, true that Hartmann's Büchlein had been written just prior to the period of which DeBoor speaks[2] and that one stanza of Walther's "Reichston" appeared as early as 1198,[3] i.e., within the period which DeBoor defines as the "Hochblüte" of Middle High German literature. But the didactic genre of "complainte" to which the Büchlein belongs was not widely imitated in Germany; and at the time when Walther composed his earliest "Sprüche", no other poet of his stature was writing didactic poetry. The major corpus of courtly didactic literature gradually came into being beginning with Walther's "Reichston" in 1198; and, as DeBoor correctly notes, it was in the years between 1210 and 1250 that such literature genuinely flourished.[4] When we consider the political and social realities of that time span as well as the nature of didactic literature itself, the reason for this phenomenon becomes apparent.

The double election of 1198, considered by some historians to be "the most fatal event in the medieval history of Germany",[5] occurred

at a time when the Empire was besieged by external forces and internal strife. The election of Philip of Swabia, a Hohenstaufen, and Otto IV of Brunswick, a Welf, led to ten years of bitter civil war, which culminated with the murder of Philip on June 21, 1208. Otto received the imperial crown in 1209, but he was soon excommunicated by Innocent III for invading the kingdom of Sicily, a papal fief and the realm of the then last Hohenstaufen and papal ward, Frederick II. A Hohenstaufen rebellion against Otto returned Frederick to his ancestral throne in 1212, but the civil war which had ravaged Europe for a decade continued until 1214. Although the initial years of Frederick's reign offered hope for the restoration of peace to the Empire, that hope soon proved to be illusory. Frederick's reign led to a final struggle between Empire and Papacy, and it ended in 1250, the year of Frederick's death, with the virtual dissolution of the Hohenstaufen dynasty. Conrad IV, Frederick's son, ruled for a brief four year period, after which the Interregnum with its unbridled lawlessness and total lack of political direction prevailed until 1273.

Confronted with a rapidly decaying political and social order, authors such as Walther, Thomasin and others set out to take issue with the problems of their age and to redefine the ideals and values of courtly society. Those values were also defined and in part elucidated in the great courtly and heroic epics of the era; but although the didactic intent of such works was unmistakable, their primary aim was to entertain rather than to teach. The contrast between courtly ideals and the political and social realities of the times made it imperative

that the most basic ethical questions of courtly society be answered in an even clearer and more direct manner, not so much for the sake of entertaining as for the sake of teaching in order to sustain the common ideals. Thomasin, for example, clearly states the didactic motive which prompted him to compose his lengthy work. In Book IX of the Welscher Gast he responds to the complaints of his exhausted pen by declaring that he is not writing "durch kurzwîle", i.e, for the purpose of pleasure or entertainment (12274), but "durch nôt, wan ich sihe wol/ daz man nien tuot daz man sol." (12289f.) He, along with the other didactic writers of his age, felt compelled by contemporary conditions to concern himself explicitly and directly with those issues which had been treated in a more subtle and indirect way in epic literature: the proper relationship of man to God and of man to his fellow man; the role of the ruler, the knight, the lady, the vassal; the essence of virtue and nobility; and proper courtly conduct.

Although the didactic authors of the period shared the same basic concerns, the form in which they expressed those concerns differed. In this chapter we will focus on the two most important forms of didactic literature: on "Spruchdichtung" as it is represented in the generations of Herger and Spervogel, Walther von der Vogelweide and Reinmar von Zweter, and on the so-called "lehrhafte Dichtung" as represented particularly by Thomasin and Freidank. In the preceding chapters we have generally adhered to chronological order in treating the various works in which milte played a role. In this chapter,

however, the nature of the works themselves must determine the order which we will follow. The nature of "Spruchdichtung" is brevity; lyric poetry, whether or not it is didactic, has a carefully defined, narrow focus, as opposed to the broader, much more explicit focus of works such as Thomasin's Welscher Gast. Because Thomasin expresses what the authors of the courtly and heroic epics had often only implicitly revealed about the meaning and role of milte, we shall begin with his work and proceed to Freidank's Bescheidenheit before treating "Spruchdichtung".

A. Thomasin von Zerclaere

Der Welsche Gast, which was written in ten months during the winter of 1215-16, is the work of a young cleric whose native language was not German but Italian. Thomasin was born ca. 1185 in Friaul, and he served at the court of Wolfger von Erla, the Patriarch of Aquileia and former Bishop of Passau. The motives which prompted him to write such a lengthy work in a language which was not his own can be at least partially deduced from the historical period during which he lived and also from the significant location at which he worked.

At the time of Wolfger, Aquileia was one of the important political centers of the Empire. The Patriarch, as princeps italiae, was the vassal of the emperor, and as a high-ranking cleric he was also the vassal of the pope. He reigned over the territory which controlled the eastern Alpine passes and often made contact between

Italy and the rest of the Empire possible. Moreover, he was actively involved in contemporary political problems, as were all the patriarchs of this era. Located at the court of Wolfger, Thomasin was in an ideal position to view the decisive political and social happenings of his time. He was not untouched by the civil strife which engulfed the realm as a result of the dual election of 1198, and he experienced the way in which Wolfger's attempts to bring peace to the area were destroyed by the murder of Philip of Swabia. He saw the appointment of Wolfger as legate of the Empire under Otto IV, and soon afterwards he witnessed the return of his disillusioned lord to Aquileia in May 1210, after Wolfger's renewed efforts to clarify the political situation of Upper Italy once again proved to be futile as Otto came under the negative influence of Diebold von Schweinpeunt.[6] Thomasin also shared in the hope and optimism of the times as Frederick II was elected emperor, but he was not content to silently await the advent of a better era.

In his Welscher Gast, Thomasin repeatedly interprets specific ills of his times. We noted above that he felt compelled to write because he saw that people no longer behaved according to the moral and ethical standards by which they were meant to govern their lives. His criticism of the times reaches all levels of society and often takes the form of the ubi sunt motif, in which the evils of the present are contrasted to the glories of a bygone Golden Age. Thomasin notes, for example, that virtues such as constancy, veracity and loyalty have vanished from the conduct of human affairs, and thus he

asks, "wâ ist nu staet bî unser zît?" (2459), and "wâ ist nu triuwe und wârheit?" (2464) In fact, virtue in general has disappeared, and he places the blame with the lords and rulers:

> Wâ von mac man niht vinden hiute
> alsô tugenthafte liute
> alsô man hie bevor vant?
> daz mag ich iu sagen zehant:
> die herren wâren tugenthaft,
> sô liebte den andrn ir tugende kraft
> daz si vüeren nâch der tugent
> beidiu an alter und an jugent.
> nu habent si verkêrt ir site,
> dâ müeze wir ouch varen mite. (6281ff.)

While virtuous men were once treated honorably at court, today the evildoers and usurers receive preferential treatment, and men of virtue are turned away without recognition (6299ff.).

Keenly aware of growing political, social and moral decay, Thomasin seeks a solution to these ills in education:

> Thomasin sees in ignorance the source of all present upheaval in society - a thoughtless ignorance in people that he wants to correct by guiding them to knowledge and through knowledge to virtue. What distinguishes man from beast is his ability to gain virtue and reason, and both are seen as the consequence of an educational process.[7]

Because he is convinced of the efficacy of learning and education, he sets out to write a work which will teach his readers

> waz vrümkeit und waz zuht sî
> und waz tugende unde wî
> beidiu wîp unde man,
> swerz von im selben niht enkan,
> ze guoten dingen komen sol. (25ff.)

He also wishes to convey the true essence of nobility, which is perhaps best summarized by the words "daz niemen edel heizen sol/ niwan

der der rehte tuot" (3902f.). For Thomasin it is not high birth but virtuous conduct alone which constitutes nobility.

Thomasin is most eager to be understood by his audience. He does not limit himself exclusively to a courtly audience but tries instead to reach all levels of society, from peasant and child to scholar and prince. But he realizes that the understanding of such abstract concepts as nobility of spirit must be conveyed to different people by different means. Thus he uses the technique of repetitious variation, frequently making comments such as the following:

> swerz rehte niht vernemen kan,
> dem wil ichz anders zeigen, wan
> ich wil daz iegelîcher habe daz
> daz er mac verstên baz. (6037ff.)

He also urges his readers to use whatever means at their disposal - be they pictures and statues for the illiterate or books for the educated - in order to learn "waz ein ieglîch man tuon sol/ der nâch vrümkeit wil leben wol." (1133f.) In order to convey his message to a wide variety of readers as clearly as possible, he begins with an examination of the every-day habits of youngsters and concludes with a consideration of those virtues which pertain most especially to rulers: reht and milte.

The tenth and final book of Thomasin's work is dedicated almost exclusively to the virtue of milte. For Thomasin as for Hartmann, milte is synonymous with the spirit of "rîcher muot". But while authors such as Hartmann incorporate this concept into their writings without elaborating on its meaning and far-reaching implications,

Thomasin presents his readers with an explicit and detailed examination of the nature of milte and its role in society. It is the special merit of his work that it defines and explains at length the various courtly virtues which are often taken for granted in other works of literature. The exhaustiveness of Thomasin's treatment of milte and of the other courtly virtues reveals his intention to show how the spirit of those virtues can be realized in men of all stations.

1. Milte and reht. Thomasin begins his discussion of milte in Book X by clarifying its relationship to the virtue of reht, which was the theme of the preceding book. He does so in order to demonstrate that milte is "gar des rehtes kint" (13580), i.e., that it fully incorporates justice within itself but that it also greatly surpasses justice. Thomasin makes seven different comparisons of milte and reht. In the first comparison he notes that reht gives "von reht", i.e., that it gives each man what rightfully belongs to him or what he should receive, whereas milte gives "nâch rehte" (13581f.). The meaning of "nâch rehte geben" becomes clear in the third comparison, when Thomasin states:

> sô ist daz gegeben nâch reht
> daz man gît von miltem muot
> und daz niht von schulden tuot. (13602ff.)

While reht gives each man exactly what is due him, milte does not give out of a sense of obligation but out of a sense of "miltem muot". Thomasin uses this phrase synonymously with "rîcher muot" to connote the predisposition, desire or will to act nobly and generously

towards one's fellow man. It is in the nature of milte to go beyond the bounds of mere justice, to give not because one is compelled to give but because one wishes to do so of one's own accord.

We encountered implicit but clear examples of giving "nâch rehte" in Hartmann's Erec when the title hero, prompted by the genuine desire to be generous, gave far more than what he legally owed to the young servant of Galoein and to the innkeeper who had rendered him service. Gahmuret's willingness to share with Galoes the inheritance which belonged solely to him according to the dictates of custom and law also implicitly illustrated the principle of "nâch rehte geben", as did Sigmunt's offer to allow the widow Kriemhild to continue to rule in his kingdom and to enjoy all her former privileges, even though the death of Siegfried legally annulled her right to do so. Thomasin's first and third comparisons of milte and reht thus explicitly state what the authors of the courtly and heroic epics tacitly assumed about the nature of milte.

In the second comparison Thomasin reiterates that reht is concerned with giving the individual what is due him. Justice does not distinguish between its recipients but repays each man exactly what has been taken away from him, be the amount large or small. Milte, on the other hand, makes a distinction between its recipients, giving large gifts to one man and small gifts to another, "eim ieglîchn nâch sîner werdekeit" (13597). With these words Thomasin alludes to an idea which he later explains at length. To milte belongs the element of bescheidenheit, the capacity to judge each man according

to his individual worth and to bestow gifts upon him in proportion to his merit.

The remaining comparisons stress the pleasant aspects of milte - aspects which are often lacking when justice is exercised. In the words of Charlotte Spartz:

> Dabei wiederholt sich die Beobachtung des letzten Buches, daß der reht-Darstellung etwas Abstraktes, Kühles anhaftet, während die Tugend milte in warmen, freundlichen Farbtönen gezeichnet ist . . . . [8]

The fourth comparison, for example, states that milte gives only that which is already in its possession, whereas reht often gives what is not its own. Thomasin explains that if a man has something which does not rightfully belong to him, reht does not allow him to retain it but instead takes it away from him and returns it to the rightful owner (13605ff.). He expands upon this thought in the fifth comparison by noting that while reht gives and takes, milte is only concerned with giving (13615). The mere act of giving, however, does not constitute true milte. More important that the gift itself is the desire or will to be generous: "sô wizzet daz diu milte lît/ an der gâbe mit ir willen gar . . . . " (13616f.) Thomasin, like the authors of the courtly and heroic epics which we have discussed, underscores the necessity of giving willingly, and he reiterates this idea throughout his discussion of the virtue of milte.

In the sixth comparison Thomasin declares that reht gives both "lieb unde leit" (13623), whereas milte gives only "daz einem manne lieb ist" (13626). By giving according to the dictates of justice,

one complies with the law; by giving in the spirit of milte, one creates an atmosphere in which happiness prevails. Reht does not always engender happiness because it must sit in judgment of people, either exhonorating or condemning them according to their actions ("daz reht ouch urteil gît", 13637); milte, in contrast, gives only that which benefits the individual.

The seven comparisons reach a climax with the observation that reht makes life in society possible, but it is milte which makes life among men pleasant. If it were not for justice and the courts, Thomasin argues, disputes between individuals could not be settled. As a result, friendship would be destroyed and milte could not exist. Justice creates a climate in which men can live together in peace; only in such a climate can milte flourish. Thus Thomasin concludes:

> dâ von verstêt daz ez geschiht
> von dem rehte zaller vrist
> daz ein man bî dem andern ist
> und von der milte geschehen sol
> daz einer sî bî dem andern wol. (13644ff.)

2. Thomasin's attitude towards milte. Having demonstrated that milte is the child of reht which grows to surpass its parent and that it is milte above all else which makes life in society pleasant, Thomasin states the reasons which prompted him to conclude his work with a discussion of this virtue. These reasons clearly reveal his attitude towards milte. In the first place, milte comes after justice and enhances what justice has wrought (13653ff.). We saw in the Kudrun, for example, that justice had to be done before milte could be exercised at the festivities with which the work concluded.

For Thomasin, milte is the virtue which completes or "crowns" not only justice but all the other virtues as well. Thus he states that one must manifest the other virtues before beginning to exercise generosity (13668ff.), and he adds:

> sô sol man übergulden gar
> mit der milte, daz ist wâr,
> swaz tugende man erzeiget hât,
> deist mîn und der zühte rât. (13673ff.)

Thomasin supports his appraisal of milte as the crowning virtue by explaining the reciprocal relationship which exists between it and all the other courtly virtues. On the one hand, the man who displays generosity cannot be considered milte if he lacks the other virtues (13679f.). On the other hand, all the other virtues which he possesses count as nothing if they are not crowned by milte: "Die tugende die sint gar enwiht,/ ziert mans mit der milte niht." (13677f.) Thus we see that in Thomasin's opinion, all the other virtues serve as a necessary foundation upon which milte rests. It is as if he were saying that the building cannot be constructed if the foundation is lacking, but that the foundation alone, without the superstructure, is both incomplete and useless. The statement that the other virtues are meaningless without milte points to the special place which milte holds in Thomasin's hierarchy of values. He stresses its prominent position by means of a metaphor in which milte is a royal personage and the other virtues are its handmaidens:

> Der juncvrouwen gesinde hât
> reht daz ez ûz der kemenat
> vor der vrouwen treten sol.

dâ von stêt ouch daz harte wol
daz man die milte hinder schouwe
wan si ist der tugende vrouwe. (13689ff.)

After showing that milte is the crowning and most regal virtue, Thomasin progresses to the second reason for discussing it at the end of the work. He notes that in contrast to all the other virtues, which generally reach full fruition only when the individual is advanced in years, milte can be fully developed in youth (13715ff.). If the individual is truly milte, i.e., if he is generous not for the sake of winning fame or acquiring material advantages but for the sake of acting nobly and magnanimously towards his fellow man, he usually manifests this trait early in life and continues to be milte as he grows older. For that reason milte is the virtue which Thomasin most cherishes; hence he discusses it last: "dâ von gevellet si mir baz/ dan dehein tugent, wizzet daz." (13741f.)

3. Thomasin's definition of milte. After a brief discussion of the vice of greed, which we shall consider later, Thomasin announces the themes of the remainder of Book X. He proposes to answer three basic questions: (1) What is milte? (2) Is it possible for the impoverished individual to be milte? (3) How should one give if one wishes to give "nâch rehte"? Thomasin partially defined the concept of milte in his discussion of its relationship to reht, but at this point he gives an even more specific answer to his first question:

Diu milte ist ein tugente guot
und hât ir wurze in rîchem muot.
nu sage waz milte müge sîn?
si ist des rîchen muotes schîn.

daz geben heizet milte niht,
doch wizzet daz ez geschiht
von der milte, der gerne gît. (13951ff.)

Milte is a virtue, and it is also a manifestation of "rîcher muot", a phrase which is best translated as a "noble attitude" or by the New High German "edle Gesinnung". This definition is by no means new to us, for we have seen it in works of literature, either implicitly or explicitly, since the time of Hartmann's earliest epic. Furthermore, the mere act of giving does not constitute true milte; gifts are true or false signs of milte, depending upon the intention of the giver. If it is the intention of the giver to give "von miltem muot" or "von rîchem muot", then his gift is a sign of the true spirit of milte:

gît man von miltem muote gar,
die gâbe vür die warheit
bezeichent milte und vrümkeit. (13960ff., our underlining)

If, however, the giver bestows gifts solely for the sake of winning fame or improving his reputation in the eyes of the world, his gift is a false sign of milte (13977ff.). According to Thomasin's definition of milte, then, the "spielmännische Freigebigkeit" which we discussed in preceding chapters is not to be regarded as milte by courtly standards, for it is rendered for the sake of winning honor in the eyes of the world and for other ulterior motives as well. Only the gift which is given out of a selfless desire to act nobly and generously towards the recipient can be considered a true sign of milte.

Thomasin repeatedly emphasizes the fact that milte is primarily an attitude rather than the concrete action of giving. Throughout his work he stresses the Christian notion that God is concerned with the intention which underlies any given action more than with the action itself, and he applies this notion to the virtue of milte as well. In Book IV, for example, he states:

> . . . got siht den muot
> baz dan daz der man getuot.
> sî daz ein man tuo rehte wol,
> sîn getât doch heizen sol
> eintweder übel ode guot
> dar nâch und im stât sîn muot. (4699ff.)[9]

In Book V, too, he declares that "got siht niwan an den muot" (6168). To demonstrate this assertion, he takes the example of a man who possesses ten pennies and gives away one for the sake of God. This man, he says, has done just as much as has the man who possesses "zehen tûsent marc" and gives away 1,000 for the sake of God, for both men have given "mit reinem muot" (6169ff.).

To a large extent, then, Thomasin's definition of milte reflects his Christian values. At the same time it also reflects the influence of Aristotelian thought. Around the time that Thomasin writes his Welscher Gast the new learning from the Islamic realm reaches the Western World via Spain and France, via Sicily and perhaps even via Constantinople.[10] Thomasin incorporates many of the ideas of the Greek philosopher into his own work. His emphasis on the intention rather than the action of the giver as the essence of milte is found in Aristotle's discussion of the corresponding virtue of liberality

in the Nichomachean Ethics. There Aristotle states: "The term 'liberality' is used relatively to a man's substance; for liberality resides not in the multitude of the gifts but in the state of character of the giver . . . . "[11]

In addition to defining milte as a manifestation of the attitude of "rîcher muot" in Book X, Thomasin also defines this virtue in another way at an earlier juncture of the epic. He begins by defining virtue in general in the following manner: "Zwischen zwein untugenden ist/ ein tugent zaller vrist." (9993f.) For Thomasin, virtue is a mean state between two extremes, i.e., between the extremes of excess on the one hand and deficiency on the other. As an example Thomasin cites the virtue of diumuot, which is a mean state between the excess of hôhverte and the deficiency of bloedekeit (9995ff.). Another example is the virtue of einvalt, which lies midway between the extremes of kündekeit and nerrescheit (10021f.). In defining virtue in such a manner, Thomasin reveals his familiarity with the Aristotelian definition of virtue:

> Virtue, then, is a state of character concerned with choice, lying in a mean, i.e. the mean relative to us, this being determined by a rational principle, and by that principle by which the man of practical wisdom would determine it. Now it is a mean between two vices, that which depends on excess and that which depends on defect; and again it is a mean because the vices respectively fall short of or exceed what is right in both passions and actions, while virtue both finds and chooses that which is intermediate. (NE, p. 1106b)

For Thomasin, the virtue of milte is also a mean state between two extremes, as the following words indicate:

> niemen arc wesen sol;
> man sol sich doch behüeten wol
> daz man niht verwerf sîn guot:
> der ist ein tore der daz tuot.
> diu milte gêt die mittern strâze,
> sie behaltet unde gît nâch mâze. (10027ff.)

According to this definition, milte lies between the deficiency of greed and the excess of wastefulness or the tendency to squander one's wealth and belongings. Thomasin's definition of milte clearly calls to mind the Aristotelian definition of the corresponding virtue of liberality:

> Let us speak next of liberality. It seems to be the mean with regard to wealth . . . . Further, prodigality and meanness are excesses and defects with regard to wealth; and meanness we always impute to those who care more than they ought for wealth . . . . (NE, p. 1119b)[12]

The implications of Thomasin's definition of milte become even clearer as he turns to the second question which he has posed: Can a man be considered milte if he has nothing to give? Thomasin's answer to this question is consistent with his conception of the nature of the virtue. Since milte is a disposition rather than an action, it follows that even the poorest of men can manifest this attribute. Thomasin laments the fact that in the present age people are unwilling to believe that a man is milte unless he can prove it by means of a concrete gift:

> Swen diu milte ist an geborn,
> ist er arm, er hât verlorn
> siner brieve insigel gar.

da von geschiht, daz ist wâr,
daz man dem brieve geloubet niht,
dâ manz insigel an niht siht. (13997ff.)

The truly liberal man who is born poor is like a letter that lacks a seal, i.e., a tangible sign which demonstrates its authenticity. Thomasin would have his readers look beyond the obvious external sign to the inner attitude of the individual, where the true essence of milte resides. He goes on to state that a writer cannot write without ink, and yet the fact that he lacks the means to practise his art does not mean that he is not a writer (14013ff.). What matters is the writer's desire to write, just as the desire to be generous defines the essence of milte:

Swer hât die vrümkeit und den muot
daz er gaeb, hiet er daz guot,
der ist niht minner tugenthaft
danne der siner milte kraft
mit gâbe hât gebreitet wît,
wan er hât daz er dâ gît. (14029ff.)

Thomasin's words call to mind the poor but noble Koralus of Hartmann's epic, who willingly shared his meager resources with Erec; they also remind us of the penniless hermit Trevrizent, whose goodness towards Parzival gave the hero a greater sense of well-being than he had experienced when he was surrounded by the opulence of Munsalvaesche.

4. The sixteen rules of milte. Having shown that the impoverished individual is just as capable of being milte as the rich man, Thomasin proceeds to a discussion of his third question: How should milte be exercised? He prefaces his remarks with an expression of anger at the custom whereby the name of milte is applied to actions

which should properly be labelled as vice. People say that a man is milte if he gives away stolen goods as presents (14060ff.). Thomasin attributes this phenomenon to the prevalence of greed, which blinds the individual's judgment so that he is no longer able to distinguish between true and false signs of milte (14065ff.). Because milte is the child of reht, it can in no way be associated with the giving of goods which have been acquired by illicit means (14123ff.).

After these introductory remarks, Thomasin presents his audience with sixteen rules which reveal the manner in which gifts are to be given:

(1) The first rule states that the element of bescheidenheit belongs to the virtue of milte. As we noted above, Thomasin uses this word to indicate that the individual must give on the basis of wisdom, insight and understanding. Bescheidenheit dictates that one must give gifts which are suited to the recipient. Thus the rich man should receive unusual gifts, while the poor man should receive useful ones. If the giver does not distinguish between recipients, he gives "umbescheidenlîchen", i.e., unwisely (14172). That Thomasin associates wisdom with virtue is clear from the closing lines of the first rule:

> swâ unbescheidenunge ist,
> dâ ist diu milte niht zer vrist,
> wan diu untugent lît
> verre von der tugent zaller zît. (14173ff.)

(2) The second rule reiterates Thomasin's basic definition of milte as a mean state between two extremes, and it also expands upon

the role of bescheidenheit in the practice of milte. Thomasin notes that the man who wishes to give wisely should give neither too little nor too much. If he gives too much, he robs himself. Moreover, if he is generous to the point of wastefulness, he might be forced to acquire goods by illicit means such as robbery and deception. By doing so, he no longer acts according to the dictates of milte: "swer zunreht iht hât genomen,/ der ist dâ ûz der milte komen." (14191f.)

Thomasin's remarks at this point of his work reveal the possible influence of Aristotle, who states that the liberal man will not take from the wrong sources (NE, p. 1120^{a}) The philosopher also notes that the wasteful or prodigal individual generally takes from the wrong quarters, for his wealth is soon dissipated by his lavish giving, and he then has no other recourse but to acquire goods by illicit means or by the acceptance of questionable profits. Aristotle takes a more benevolent attitude towards the prodigal man than towards the greedy one, observing that the former has a natural tendency towards liberality and that both poverty and the passage of time will cure him of his excess and enable him to arrive at the mean. Moreover, such a man is not intrinsically bad but only a bit foolish, and he benefits others by his giving, whereas the miser benefits no one (NE, 1121^{a}f.). Thomasin, like Aristotle, takes a much harsher view of greed than of prodigality. This is evidenced by the fact that he dedicates far more space to a discussion of the former than the latter. In addition, he speaks more objectively about prodigality,

while he is scarcely able to conceal his utter contempt for the vice of greed.

Even though Thomasin is less critical of prodigality than of greed, he insists that the mean must be observed in giving. In this he differs from most of the authors of precourtly and early courtly literature and from the authors of the heroic epics which we have discussed, for they regard unlimited giving or giving to the point of self-impoverishment as an expression of milte. Only in the courtly epics do we find a tendency to implicitly define milte as giving in moderation.

The element of bescheidenheit is implicit in the second part of rule two, which states that a ruler should distribute his wealth differently than other men. If a knight spends his annual income within the same year that he earns it, he does not exceed the limits of propriety. If a ruler does so, however, he acts unwisely. He ought to save a portion of his annual income so that his people will not suffer deprivation in the event that he is forced to declare war for the well-being and honor of his kingdom. If such circumstances compelled him to take more from his friends than from his enemies, he would be acting in an uncourtly manner (14205ff.). Although Thomasin believes that a ruler should have ample treasure in his storehouse in order to assure the welfare of his people, he also warns that the amassing of goods can easily lead to greed. It is evident from this statement that he once again has the mean state in mind. He goes on to observe that the flattery which a ruler receives from his subjects -

flattery which tells him that he is the epitome of generosity when he is in reality greedily hoarding his goods - can mislead the ruler to believe that folly is milte and that greed is wisdom (14253ff.).

(3) The third rule is concerned with the attitude of the giver. In the first place, the man who wishes to give should not wait too long before doing so. If he hesitates instead of giving promptly, he causes the recipient to feel shame; such a man does not really give but sells the gift at the price of the shame of the recipient (14259ff.). Furthermore, his hesitation reveals that he does not really want to give; thus he does not act according to the spirit of milte, which demands that gifts be given willingly. Similarly, the man who gives "mit zorn und leide" (14291) or "mit vorht" (14313) also acts contrary to the dictates of milte. Once again Thomasin reveals that the disposition of the giver is more important than the gift itself. If a small gift is given joyfully, it is worth more than a large one that is given out of "swacher muot", i.e., out of a spirit which is antithetical to "rîcher muot":

guot herze machet zaller zît
kleine gâbe genaeme und guot,
sô machet ein swacher muot
sô ungenaem die gâbe grôz
daz si der kleinn niht sint genôz. (14298ff.)

(4) In the fourth rule Thomasin reemphasizes the necessity of giving joyfully and willingly:

Man sol sîn ougen und sîn munt
sô gehaben zuo der stunt,
swenn man gît, daz man sînen muot
sehe, daz manz gerne tuot. (14317ff.)

He shares the view of Aristotle, who states that no one would admit

that a man is liberal unless that man takes pleasure in acts of liberality. According to the philosopher, virtuous actions such as the practice of liberality are a source of pleasure in themselves. Thus it follows that if a man gives without pleasure, his action cannot be construed as a virtuous one (NE, p. 1099^{a}).[13] Thomasin goes on to note that along with the gift one should also give "beidiu den willen und den muot" (14324). The words "wille" and "muot" repeatedly occur in Thomasin's discussion of milte, just as they do in descriptive passages involving milte in the great courtly and heroic epics of the era.

(5) According to the fifth rule, the man who wishes to give in the true spirit of milte should not be concerned with receiving something in return. It is in the nature of milte to give in a totally selfless manner; if milte takes something, it does so in order to be able to give even more (14333ff.). These thoughts are reminiscent of the words of Aristotle, who declares that the liberal man is not

> . . . a ready asker; for it is not characteristic of a man who confers benefits to accept them lightly. But he will take from the right sources, e.g. from his own possessions, not as something noble but as a necessity, that he may have something to give. (NE, p. 1120^{a})

Thomasin concludes this rule by stating that giving for the sake of receiving something in return is not milte but greed (14349ff.).

(6) The generous man should not cease to give simply because the recipient of his generosity fails to express gratitude (14355ff.).

It belongs to a noble attitude ("ze vrîem muot", 14371) to be ready to suffer a loss and nevertheless to continue doing what is right. Both this rule and the following one seem to suggest that the exercise of virtue is its own reward.

(7) Having given a gift, a man should quickly forget that he has done so, and he should also remain silent about his deed. The man who receives a gift, however, should never cease to remember it, and he should tell others about it (14467ff.).

(8) One should give in the same way that one would like to receive:

> Swelich man milte ist,
> der sol sô geben zaller vrist
> daz in dunke, er neme daz,
> so mag er nimmer geben baz . . . . (14479ff.)

The eighth rule suggests that the giver should possess a certain selfless quality which enables him to put himself in the place of the recipient. In addition, it calls to mind the Christian dictums "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" (Matthew 7, 12; Luke 6, 31) and "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Luke 10, 27). Implicit in this rule is the assumption that milte is not only an attitude but a loving attitude. With the gift the giver should express as much love as he himself would wish to receive.

(9) The ninth rule also implies that milte is a loving attitude. It states that the liberal man should accept gifts as if he himself had never been generous to the giver. When he receives a gift, he should not do so with the thought that he has given more than he is

receiving, because in such a case his earlier acts of liberality were not genuine acts of milte but mere commercial exchanges (14485ff.). The liberal man should accept "mit guotem muot" even the smallest of gifts bestowed upon him by an impoverished friend (14494), and he should regard such a gift as something large and valuable because of the friendship which it signifies (14495ff.). Moreover, because milte is a loving attitude, the liberal man should not hesitate to be indebted to someone who is dear to him:

> ein milt man sol versagen niht,
> wil im iemen geben iht,
> wan swelich man mir lîeb ist,
> dem wil ich gern zetlîcher vrist
> schuldic sîn, daz ich im mære
> gelte, deist der milte lêre. (14505ff.)

In addition to stressing the loving attitude which belongs to the essence of milte, the above quotation suggests that the virtue of milte is an ideal means of fostering and perpetuating friendship; the liberal man rejoices when he receives a gift, however small, from his friend, because it is a sign of their friendship and also because it offers him the opportunity to reciprocate that friendship by giving to his friend at a later time.

(10) The tenth rule elaborates on the theme of friendship and on the necessity of rejoicing in the fact that one is indebted to one's friend. To friendship belong the elements of trust and confidence. Thus Thomasin states that the liberal man should not be too hasty in reciprocating when he receives a gift from a friend. If he immediately confers a gift upon the friend who has been generous to him, he reveals

that he does not like to be indebted to that person, i.e., that he lacks trust and confidence in his friend. By doing so, he behaves not like a friend but like a merchant who engages in a commercial transaction with a stranger whom he has no reason to trust (14529ff.). Such conduct displays an attitude which is alien to the spirit of "rîcher muot".

(11) Just as the fields do not yield their harvest immediately but only at the right moment (14552ff.), so, too, should the liberal man wait for the appropriate moment to give and to reciprocate the generosity which has been accorded him:

> swelich man milte ist,
> der wart der stat und der vrist,
> wâ oder wenne er gelten sol
> und geben, daz gevellt mir wol. (14561ff.)

This rule closely parallels the words of Aristotle, who says that the liberal man "will give for the sake of the noble, and rightly; for he will give to the right people, the right amounts, and at the right time . . . . " (NE, p. 1120[a])

(12) In the event that the individual has no material goods with which to reciprocate the generosity that has been shown to him, he should give the gift of "rîchen muot" (14565f.). Thomasin notes that those who lack material possessions often tend to avoid the individuals who have been generous to them. This tendency, he says, is a sign not only of cowardice but also of ignorance about the true nature of milte. Once again Thomasin stresses the definition of milte as the willingness to give rather than as the concrete action of giving:

"swer mir erzeigt willigen muot,/ ich nim ez vür ein grôzez guot." (14581f.).

(13) Rules thirteen to fifteen implicitly pertain to the element of bescheidenheit, to the necessity of giving on the basis of wisdom, insight and sound judgment. The thirteenth rule states that not all gifts are to be given in the same way. Those gifts which bring honor to the recipients, such as knightly accouterments and courtly presents, should be given in public because they enhance the joy of courtly society. It is partially for this reason that milte plays so large a role in descriptions of courtly festivities in the various epics which we have considered. The "hochzît" is traditionally a time of joy, and that joy is made complete by the distribution of gifts to honored guests. By the same token, gifts which alleviate poverty should be given in secret, for they aid the individual in trying circumstances rather than bringing him honor (14589ff.).

(14) The fourteenth rule, in addition to reflecting the need to use wisdom and sound judgment when giving, is a logical consequence of the definition of milte as the desire to act in a noble manner towards others. It states that one should never give a gift which could bring harm to the recipient. By giving wine to a drunken man, for example, one only harms him and takes away from him more than one has given him (14609ff.).

(15) According to the fifteenth rule, one should never give senseless or useless gifts. By giving weapons to a woman, for

example, one gives in the wrong manner (14619ff.)

(16) The final rule reiterates the close relationship between milte and friendship. It states that one should give enduring gifts because the friendship which one conveys by means of the gift should also be enduring (14623ff.).

Upon completing the sixteen rules which answer the question of how one should give, Thomasin begins the concluding remarks of his work by stating that his book is a gift of friendship for those who either are or wish to become virtuous (14626ff.). It can therefore be said that in a very real sense the Welscher Gast was written as an expression of the author's own attribute of milte, of his desire to act nobly and generously towards those readers to whom a virtuous life is of major concern.

5. Additional remarks about milte. In addition to dedicating the concluding book of his work to a discussion of milte, Thomasin also comments upon this concept in other books as well. These comments merit consideration because they further clarify Thomasin's concept of milte. In his discussion of the virtues which pertain especially to women, for example, Thomasin observes that milte is a fitting virtue for all people and that women should indeed be milte; but he adds that the virtue is more suitable for knights than for women (973ff.). This belief is also reflected in works of precourtly and early courtly literature and in the masterpieces of the Arthurian genre; in them, the epithet milte is only rarely ascribed to women, whereas almost every outstanding knight and ruler is explicitly

described as milte. Only in the heroic epics which we have considered does milte appear with relative frequency as an attribute of female characters.

Just as milte is primarily a masculine virtue, so, too, is it an aristocratic one. Thomasin regards milte as a necessary and indispensable attribute of a ruler; thus he deplores the fact that the rulers of his era do not distribute their goods "nâch rehte", i.e., according to the dictates of milte:

> seht wie der herre teilet wol
> daz er nâch rehte teilen sol!
> er ersticket einen mit guot
> und laet den andern mit armuot
> ân guote kunst gar verderben,
> der wol kunst kan erwerben.
> wirt danne von sînen schulden niht
> der und dirre ein boesewiht? (6573ff.)

It is clear that in the non-money based feudal economy the welfare of society depended in part on the liberality of its rulers. If they were greedy or if they failed to distribute their wealth equitably, their subjects necessarily suffered deprivation and were thus susceptible to the temptation of securing their livelihood by dishonest means. The importance of the aristocratic virtue of milte in feudal society is aptly summarized by Spartz:

> Wenn man sich die ständische Gliederung der Welt des Hohen Mittelalters vor Augen stellt, so tritt die Bedeutung der milte hervor. Die Ausprägung des aristokratischen Lehnswesens mußte notwendig der milte wachsendes Schwergewicht geben, viel stärker als etwa in vorchristlicher, römischer Zeit mit ihrer republikanischen Verfassung . . . . Wir brauchen uns nur daran zu erinnern, wie die Dichtung Walthers von der Vogelweide das persönliche Erlebnis dieses sozialen Problemkreises gestaltet hat.[14]

In the virtue of milte as it is exercised by the ruling class Thomasin sees one of the principal means of assuring the welfare of society.

That milte is an attribute of God is also mentioned by Thomasin. In his discussion of prayer the author states that the man who prays for worldly goods has "einen swachen muot" (10309), for such a man underestimates the boundless generosity of God:

> got ist sô milte und sô guot,
> swer bitet umbe sîn rîche,
> daz er im gît ouch sicherlîche
> guot, daz er mac geleben. (10310ff.)

Thomasin goes on to observe that God wants his creatures to request great things of Him (such as the kingdom of heaven) because He richly bestows His treasures upon those who serve Him (10321ff.). In our discussion of the "Wessobrunner Gebet" we saw that from the earliest times of German literature milte was considered to be an attribute of God, who is the author of all virtues. Thomasin's comment at this juncture of his work shows the continuity of this idea.

Just as God displays milte towards His creatures, so, too, should they display milte towards Him. In Book VIII Thomasin describes at length the goodness and generosity of God in order to persuade his audience that they are obliged to reciprocate such generosity by participating in the Crusades. He begins by stating that everything that God's people have - possessions, honor, body and soul, wife and children - has been given to them by God, who so loved them that He even suffered and died for their sake (11455ff.). Because they have received countless blessings from Him, they should be willing to take

upon themselves the risks and burdens involved in rescuing the sepulcher of Christ, which is in the hands of the infidels (11491ff.). Thomasin takes issue with those who argue that God Himself could rescue the Holy Sepulcher if He wished; he insists that such people must show God "willigen muot", a term which, as we have seen, often occurs in conjunction with or as a synonym for milte (11512).

In order to clearly explain his conviction, Thomasin avails himself of an analogy which not only further develops his idea but also reveals another aspect of the virtue of milte. He states that God could make the poor rich if He wished, but if He did so, it would be most difficult for the individual to demonstrate that he is milte: "diu milte diuhte gar enwiht,/ waere dehein arme niht." (11523f.) These words reflect Thomasin's belief that although milte is essentially an attitude or predisposition rather than a concrete action, it is difficult to develop and maintain such an attitude in a vacuum. Thomasin is aware of the weak and fallible nature of man; thus he states that if the world were free of poverty, the greedy man would easily convince himself that there was no one to whom he could be generous, and he would then persist in his greed (11524ff.). Poverty exists so that the rich man may have the opportunity to cultivate the virtue of milte. Similarly, God has allowed the Holy Sepulcher to fall into the hands of the heathens so that His people may demonstrate their appreciation of His goodness to them and repay that goodness in some small measure by untertaking the rescue of Christianity's most holy shrine.

Thomasin views the Crusades as an excellent means of developing the virtue of milte and other virtues as well. For that reason he appeals to the German princes to participate in the Crusades and to expend their wealth on behalf of that cause. Those who in the past have generously distributed their wealth for the sake of honor should be generous now for the sake of God, who has given them their wealth (11749ff.). Thomasin is harsh in his criticism of those rulers who are reluctant to use their riches for that cause; at the same time, he reminds them that participation in such an enterprise is an ideal means of curing the vice of greed:

> swer dâ wil are wesen
> dâ Kristes grap, als wir lesen,
> gevangen ist sô lange vrist,
> wizzet daz er gotes diep ist.
> swer sich der erg hie hât ergeben,
> der sol dâ miltecl1chen leben. (11763ff.)

6. Milte and erge. Thomasin's lengthy admonition to the German nobility to avoid greed by undertaking the rescue of the Holy Land is only one of many passages in the Welscher Gast in which the poet sharply attacks the vice of erge. Throughout his work Thomasin consciously juxtaposes milte and erge in order to warn his audience against the vice which he finds more detestable than any other:

> Thomasin konfrontiert die milte mit ihrem Gegensatz, kaltherziger Habgier, der er gleichbedeutend die Namen girescheit, girde und erge gibt . . . . Es fehlt ihm nicht an Farben, ihre Unersättlichkeit, ihre wachsende, zersetzende Kraft und Einsichtslosigkeit darzustellen. Wie die milte an Tugendglanz alle ihresgleichen überstrahlt, so reicht auch ihr furchtbares Gegenstück, die girescheit, über die anderen Untugenden noch hinaus.[15]

Because of the thoroughly negative nature of greed, it is impossible for the individual who exhibits this vice to possess true honor - a thought which repeatedly occurs in the work (987; 7462; 8053ff.). Thus Thomasin introduces the topic of _erge_ as early as Book I when he addresses himself to the young, and he returns to this theme as he advises the different levels of society, from pauper and merchant to knight and ruler. But his clearest and most direct pronouncements on _erge_ are found in Book X, where he calls attention to its two most striking features.

First of all, in contrast to _milte_, which at all times radiates warmth, _erge_ is characterized by its cold nature. Thomasin sees a relationship between the icy nature of greed and the heat of fire, in that both are insatiable and totally destructive. Just as the fire eagerly reaches out to burn and devastate everything within its reach, so, too, does greed reach out to accumulate everything within its grasp, never content with what it has but extending ever farther and destroying by its frigidity all that it is able to seize (13759ff.). Moreover, the cold nature of greed grows stronger as the individual becomes older. Whereas the other vices such as inconstancy, immoderation and impurity generally diminish and often disappear entirely as the individual advances in years, greed does not abandon its victim but grips him all the more firmly as he ages:

> der muoz sîn arc zaller vrist
> der in sîner jugent erge hât,
> wan in diu erge niht verlât. (13808ff.)

Secondly, the man who exhibits vices such as arrogance, envy, wrath, etc. is eventually able to attain insight and to overcome his vices, while the greedy individual is so blinded in his judgment that he believes he will one day attain his goal, which is total satiation:

> der arge man ist sô ungevuoc
> daz er waent mit erge gewinnen
> genuoc und kan sich niht versinnen
> daz im daz guot niht mac genüegen
> daz im diu erge kan gevüegen. (13834ff.)

Thomasin explains that such an individual is caught in a vicious circle from which there is no escape. The heart of man is meant to be the dwelling place of God, but greed drives God out of His dwelling. The individual is then left with a feeling of emptiness, because the material goods which he cherishes can never fill his heart as can God. Feeling empty, the greedy man then strives all the more after goods to fill the vacuum, thereby only increasing it:

> sô sîn muot ie laerer blîbet,
> und sô ie laerer ist der muot,
> so man ie harter strebet nâch guot. (13868ff.)

Thomasin ends his discussion of erge in Book X with a pitying lament for the man who is driven by greed (13886ff.), for such a man is enmeshed in a life of misery and self-deception.

Thomasin's remarks about erge in Book X and in similar passages throughout the work indicate that he regards this vice as one which is characterized above all by coldness, insatiability and lack of judgment. He associates erge with "bôsheit" and milte with "werdekeit", i.e., with human honor and dignity based on a life of virtue

(13895f.). Erge is an essentially selfish vice in that it retains solely for itself what milte seeks only to share with others: "swaz erge samnet boeslîchen,/ daz teilet milte bescheidenlîchen." (13901f.) It is implicitly clear from this statement that erge is an anti-social vice which contributes nothing to the welfare of the individual and society at large, while milte promotes the well-being of its recipients. For this reason milte brings the liberal man more friends than any other virtue, whereas erge provokes only enmity (13907ff.).[16]

7. Summary. Thomasin's Welscher Gast presents us with a clearer and more precisely articulated definition of milte and of its role in society than any other work which we have considered thus far. For Thomasin, milte is above all synonymous with "rîcher muot", i.e., with the desire, will or predisposition to behave in a noble and generous way towards one's fellow man. This definition explicitly reveals what the courtly and heroic epics convey in a more indirect manner about the nature of milte: that it is no longer sufficient for the individual merely to give in order to be regarded as generous, and that milte must be defined solely on the basis of the motives which prompt the act of giving. By stressing the attitude and motivation rather than the action of the giver, Thomasin mirrors the shift in emphasis from external to inner values which had come to be characteristic of the courtly era during which he wrote.

In addition to equating milte with "rîcher muot", Thomasin also defines this virtue as a mean state between the extremes of prodigality and avarice. Of all the writers whose works we have considered thus

far, Thomasin is the first to define milte in this manner. His definition reflects his familiarity with the philosophy of Aristotle, whose ethical treatises were barely known to the Western World at that time. It also demonstrates the author's belief that the virtue of mâze is an inherent feature of milte. The tendency of precourtly and early courtly literature and of the heroic epics to define milte as boundless giving or as giving to the point of self-impoverishment is explicitly rejected by Thomasin, just as it is implicitly unacceptable to the authors of the courtly epics. If the individual fails to observe the mean in giving, he is not to be regarded as milte.

Along with mâze, the elements of bescheidenheit and reht are also inherent in the nature of milte. In the sixteen rules of milte Thomasin repeatedly stresses the necessity of giving on the basis of wisdom, insight and sound judgment. Because virtue is based on wisdom, "unbescheidenunge" and milte are mutually exclusive of each other. Moreover, milte is "des rehtes kint", which implies that justice is the foundation upon which milte rests and that the giving of illicitly acquired goods can never be construed as generosity.

It is clear that a virtue such as the one which Thomasin defines - one which is predisposed towards acting in the best interests of others and which has the elements of mâze, bescheidenheit and reht as inherent components - can have only a beneficial effect on its recipients. On the individual level, it is the role of milte both to express love and to foster friendship. On a larger scale, milte enhances life in society by making it pleasant. Although justice

enables men to live together in that it settles disputes and corrects the wrongs which are committed, it lacks the warmth which milte alone provides in human interactions.

Just as milte is Thomasin's favorite virtue, erge is the vice for which he expresses particular contempt. Greed is characterized by its cold, destructive and insatiable nature. In contrast to milte, which is concerned only with giving, erge seeks to amass ever more, revealing its lack of judgment by its erroneous belief that it will one day reach its goal of total satiation. Because greed is an essentially selfish vice, the man who is enslaved by it is of no value to society and generates enmity by his attitude and actions, while the liberal man benefits society and is befriended more than any other individual. Unlike the authors of the courtly and heroic epics whose works we have considered, Thomasin deliberately juxtaposes milte and erge in order to warn his audience against the one vice which grasps its victim all the more firmly as he ages and which masters him completely with time. Thomasin's greatest concern with greed anticipates the obsession of later authors with this vice - authors such as Berthold von Regensburg, who write at a time when courtly idealism has waned and crass materialism appears to dominate man's actions.

Having considered the meaning and function of milte, "der tugende vrouwe", in the work of the author whose pronouncements on this virtue are more explicit and exhaustive than those of any other writer in

medieval German literature, we will now turn our attention to Freidank. Although he deals with milte more briefly than Thomasin, he stresses a number of points which Thomasin also emphasizes.

B. Freidank

In contrast to the Welscher Gast, Freidank's Bescheidenheit is the work of an author about whom we possess almost no biographical information. The time and place of Freidank's birth as well as his social standing are uncertain, and the extent of his education can only be surmised on the basis of familiarity with his work.[17] The "Akkon-Sprüche" alone provide a solid clue to the poet's place in the chronology of Middle High German literature. These "Sprüche" stem from Freidank's participation in the Crusade of Frederick II in 1228-29, and they lead scholars to conclude that the Bescheidenheit was written during the years between 1215 and 1230.[18]

Uncertainty also surrounds the history of the manuscripts. Freidank's "Sprüche" are consistently arranged in an orderly way, i.e., according to clearly discernible themes, in only two of the extant manuscripts; in the others they are arranged in a random fashion.[19] Because it is not known which of the manuscripts reflects the author's own arrangement of his material, scholars are sharply divided in their assessment of the poet's creativity. Several share the viewpoint of Hermann Paul, according to which Freidank was little more than a collector of "Sprüche" who followed no definite plan in the arrangement of his material. Paul maintains that the manuscripts

in which the "Sprüche" are randomly arranged correspond to the original version of the work, and he further asserts that scribes rather than the poet himself later rearranged the chaotic collection of material into a logical order.[20] The opposing viewpoint, first put forth by Wilhelm Grimm, is best represented by Günter Eifler:

> Pauls Annahme ursprünglicher Planlosigkeit und dem Zufall anheimgegebenen Sammelns birgt angesichts des Freidankschen Werkes soviele Ungereimtheiten, daß ich mich ihr nicht anschließen kann. Aus längeren Abschnitten wie etwa dem ersten Schlußgebet (180,8 bis 181,9) geht soviel an Klarheit des Gedankenaufbaus in kleineren Einheiten hervor, außerdem eine solche Bestimmtheit der Weltsicht, die sich in den Ich-Sprüchen aufs pünktlichste bestätigt findet, daß es völlig unvorstellbar ist, Freidank habe im Großen planlos und ziellos, was er gerade erfuhr, las oder hörte, aufgezeichnet und in dieser Planlosigkeit beibehalten.[21]

A careful analysis of Freidank's work inevitably leads to the conclusion that Eifler's position is correct. Despite the fact that uncertainty prevails about the life of the poet and about the original arrangement of his "Sprüche", the work itself eloquently reveals that Freidank was more than a mere collector of sayings and a writer of simple verses which hinted at his personal philosophy. Literary scholarship of recent decades has unequivocally determined that the material included in the Bescheidenheit stems from three sources:

> Sie enthält erstens Sprichwörter, ohne dadurch eine Sammlung von Volksweisheit zu sein; sie enthält zweitens theologisches Gedankengut, ist aber kein systematisch-wissenschaftliches Werk; sie enthält drittens persönliche Erfahrungen und Reflexionen Freidanks.[22]

Recent scholarship has also determined that the author incorporated

material from these sources into his work for a very definite purpose. That purpose is revealed in two different passages of the work.

The first of these passages - and the only one in which the poet directly comments about the nature of his "Sprüche" - states the poet's intention indirectly:

> Mîne sprüch sint niht geladen
> mit lügen, sünde, schande, schaden:
> in disen vier worten stât
> aller werlde missetât.
> swer ân diu vierîu sprichet baz
> den ich, daz lâze ich âne haz. (129, 17ff.)[23]

The meaning of this "Spruch" is aptly interpreted by Eifler: Freidank assures his audience that his work is free from lies and sin, and from anything which might cause shame or disgrace and harm to others. In the terms "lügen, sünde, schande, schaden" are contained all the evils which could possibly occur in the world; if anyone is free from these evils and can at the same time speak more cleverly and skillfully than the poet himself, Freidank will willingly acknowledge such a man's work. Implicit in this "Spruch" is the assumption that poetic ability alone does not justify the writing of a literary work. The basis of any work of literature must be an ethical attitude:

> Sittlichkeit ist demnach in seinen Augen die grundlegende Voraussetzung der dichterischen Aussage, und das Ethos seines eigenen Schaffens, das in 129, 17-22 schlicht und klar ausgedrückt ist, wird bestimmt von der vierfachen Absicht, nicht zu lügen, sondern die Wahrheit zu sagen; nicht der Sünde das Wort zu reden, sondern aus sittlicher Verantwortung heraus zu sprechen; nichts Schändliches zu sagen, sondern Ehrenhaftes; niemanden zu schädigen, sondern grundsätzlich wohlgesonnen zu sein. Wahrhaftigkeit,

> Sittlichkeit, Ehrenhaftigkeit und Wohlgesonnenheit sind demnach die positiven sittlichen Triebkräfte, die ihn bei der Abfassung der 'Bescheidenheit' - nach eigener Aussage - geleitet haben.[24]

Freidank's overriding concern, then, is the realm of morality and the nature of proper moral conduct.

The same idea is expressed even more directly in the introductory "Spruch":

> Ich bin genant BESCHEIDENHEIT,
> diu aller tugende krône treit.
> mich hât berihtet FRÎDANC;
> ein teil von sinnen die sint kranc. (1, 1ff.)

This verse clearly suggests that it is Freidank's intention to convey the essence of bescheidenheit, a term which is best defined as "nüchterne, objektive Kenntnis der Welt"[25] and as "das verständige Verhalten, das Arbeiten der anima rationalis, die Urteilskraft im weitesten Sinne, insbesondere im ethischen Bereich".[26] Just as milte is the crowning virtue for Thomasin, bescheidenheit is the highest virtue for Freidank. Thus it is his intention to reveal what constitutes correct ethical conduct as he perceives it; all of his "Sprüche", including those which are borrowed from other sources, are directly related to this purpose.

Far from constituting a random collection of proverbs and personal reflections, the "Sprüche" contained in the Bescheidenheit are found there precisely because they reflect the ethical beliefs of the poet. At the same time, there is a high degree of correspondence between Freidank's concept of correct ethical conduct and that of

other authors of the era, particularly Thomasin and Walther. This is especially true of milte and erge. In this chapter it will become increasingly apparent that the didactic authors of the courtly period share a remarkably similar concept of and attitude towards milte and erge, whether they write longer didactic treatises or whether they express their ideas in the form of "Sprechspruch" or "Sangspruch". Our discussion of the passages in the Bescheidenheit which relate to milte and erge will show that Freidank is one of several didactic authors who holds milte in high esteem. It will also show that he, like many of his contemporaries, regards the vice of greed with notable contempt.

Freidank's pronouncements on milte and erge have been treated in a most thorough and perceptive manner by Günter Eifler. Because little need be added to Eifler's accurate observations about these concepts, we will for the most part summarize the major points of his discussion which are relevant to our own topic.

1. Freidank's concept of milte. In our discussion of Thomasin's definition of milte, we noted that the Italian cleric repeatedly stressed the Christian notion that God is concerned with the intention which underlies any given action more than with the action itself. Freidank, like Thomasin, judges an action to be good or evil depending upon the will or intention which motivates it:

> Got rihtet nach dem muote
> ze übele unde ze guote.
> ein iegelîcher lôn enpfât
> dar nâch, als im sîn herze stât.
> der wille ie vor den werken gât
> ze guote und ouch ze missetât. (3, 9ff.)

Thus it is not surprising that for Freidank as for Thomasin, milte is above all an attitude or predisposition rather than a concrete action:

> Freidank verwendet in bemerkenswerter Weise das Wort milte, um damit Freigebigkeit im weitesten Sinne, also die sittlich gute Neigung, anderen Menschen aus dem Eigenen mitzuteilen, zu bezeichnen . . . . Nicht also meint der Dichter "freigebigkeit als ritterliche tugend", sondern als Tugend schlechthin, d.i. als das tugendhafte Verhalten eines jeden Menschen in bezug auf seine materiellen Güter.[27]

The majority of the "Sprüche" which deal with milte either implicitly or explicitly reveal the poet's concern with the attitude of the giver. As Eifler observes:

> In den Sprüchen über die milte tritt am konkreten Einzelfall mit aller erdenklichen Deutlichkeit Freidanks Grundauffassung über die Tugend . . . hervor, nämlich daß Tugend eine Angelegenheit des muotes, des Willens, der freigewählten inneren Einstellung ist.[28]

In the first place, genuine milte is concerned above all with giving. That milte is a selfless attitude which at all times seeks the welfare of others is revealed by the lines "Geben tuot dem milten baz/ dan empfâhen, wizzet daz." (86, 12f.) Moreover, milte does not merely give but rejoices in doing so; thus the liberal man suffers when he is obliged to refuse an opportunity to be generous: "Dem milten tuot verzîhen wê . . . . " (86, 14) Implicit in both of these "Sprüche" is the conviction that milte is an inner readiness to give both willingly and happily. The same idea is expressed more directly by the words "Ich weiz wol, daz ein milter man/ genuoc ze gebenne nie gewan." (86, 10f.) The liberal man is insatiable in his desire to accumulate

material goods, not in order to hoard them for his own satisfaction or to use them for his own benefit but simply so that he will be able to distribute them to others. This "Spruch" is best paraphrased as, "I know with certainty that a liberal man would always like to give more than he actually possesses." Its meaning, most appropriately interpreted by Eifler, reveals the single most important aspect of Freidank's definition of milte:

> Der sittliche Wert der milte liegt - so gesehen - weniger in der Gabe selbst als in der Bereitschaft, sie zu geben, also wieder in einer inneren Einstellung. Nicht gelegentliche Wohltaten gegenüber anderen, sondern der immerwährende Wunsch, anderen wohlzutun, macht für Freidank milte aus, und dieser Wunsch zeigt sich als solcher darin, daß er über die faktische Fähigkeit zu schenken hinausgeht.[29]

A number of other "Sprüche" logically follow from and reinforce Freidank's definition of milte as an attitude. The most important are the following:

(1) To give because one has been advised to do so does not constitute true milte (87, 12f.). A generous act can be regarded as an expression of milte only when the act springs from an inner readiness and desire to promote the well-being of the recipient; if it is prompted solely by an external source, it has nothing to do with virtuous conduct.

(2) The person who grows weary of giving ("den milte bevilte") was never a truly liberal man, despite his earlier acts of generosity (86, 22f.). As we noted above, milte is at all times concerned with giving, and this concern, if it is genuine, never wanes.

(3) The person who regrets having been generous is not truly liberal (86, 16f.). His regret indicates that he did not really want to give, i.e., that he originally lacked the inner desire and willingness to do so which constitutes the essence of milte.

(4) The gift which is given at the price of the recipient's shame is of little worth, whereas the gift which is given without having been requested is invaluable:

> Diu gâbe tuot selten wol,
> die man mit schame erbiten sol;
> diu gâbe in hohem werde lît,
> die man ungebeten gît. (111, 24ff.)

This two-part "Spruch" juxtaposes complementary ideas. On the one hand, the gift which is given reluctantly and hesitantly has little value, not only because it humiliates the recipient who receives it only after much pleading, but also because it reveals that the giver lacks true generosity. On the other hand, the gift which is given before it is requested has great value, because the recipient receives it without humiliation and because the giver demonstrates by his spontaneous act that he is truly liberal.[30] It is noteworthy that even as Freidank focuses on the feelings of the recipient, he never loses sight of the attitude of the giver.

(5) Finally, because milte is primarily an attitude, even the impoverished individual can exercise this virtue. Freidank expresses this conviction in two different passages. In the first he advises the poor "swie si leben,/ daz si doch guoten willen geben" (43, 4f.). In the second he states:

Ein man sol guoten willen hân,
mac er der werke niht begân;
guot wille vor in allen gât,
der anders niht ze gebenne hât. (110, 25ff.)

Although Eifler does not discuss these "Sprüche" within the context of milte,[31] it is most probable that Freidank had milte in mind when he incorporated them into his work. Both "Sprüche" closely parallel the idea expressed by Thomasin in lines 14029-34 of the Welscher Gast. There the author states that the person who lacks material possessions but nevertheless has the "vrümkeit" and the "muot" to be generous is by no means less virtuous than the man who is blessed with ample goods and distributes them to others. Freidank's "Sprüche", like Thomasin's statement, call to mind the poor but generous Koralus and the indigent hermit Trevrizent, both of whom abundantly gave "guoten willen", i.e., "rîchen muot", when they had little else to offer.

Thus far our discussion has shown that Freidank, like Thomasin, equates milte with the attitude of "rîcher muot". In addition, the poet shares Thomasin's conviction that the element of mâze is an inherent feature of the virtue of milte and that giving to excess cannot be regarded as true generosity. To be sure, Freidank demands selflessness of the giver, and even the willingness to make a substantial sacrifice: "Swer rehte milte wil begân,/ der muoz gebrest durch milte hân." (86, 24f.) Genuine milte is not to be equated with giving from one's surplus what one can easily do without; it involves the readiness to give that which one relinquishes with difficulty - "des er unsanfte enbirt" (111, 22) - and to endure a reasonable degree of

discomfort and hardship for the sake of promoting the welfare of others. At the same time, however, milte never totally impoverishes itself: "Diu milte niht ze lobe stât,/ der gît, dêr selbe niht enhât." (86, 18f.) In the first place, the man who gives to the point of self-impoverishment robs himself of the means to exercise generosity on future occasions. Just as importantly, such a man harms himself by his actions; and we know from Freidank's commentary about the nature of his "Sprüche" (see above 129, 17ff.) that anything which the individual does to cause harm either to others or to himself is morally reprehensible in the eyes of the poet:

> Nie ließ der Dichter . . . das wohlverstandene Eigeninteresse aus dem Auge; rechte Wahrung der persönlichen Belange, als der Voraussetzung eines geordneten und erträglichen Lebens in den realen Bedingungen der Welt, versuchte er immer wieder in Einklang zu bringen mit den sittlichen Pflichten des Menschen, und er macht an keiner dieser beiden Seiten grundlegende Abstriche. Sittlichkeit, die zu empfindlicher Selbstschädigung führt, hat für ihn keinen vernünftigen Sinn, folglich auch die an sich hoch einzuschätzende milte nicht, sobald sie die völlige Verarmung mit all ihren negativen Realfolgen nach sich zieht.[32]

In contrast to Thomasin, Freidank does not explicitly define milte as a mean state between the extremes of prodigality and avarice; but it is clear that he associates mâze with the essence of milte. While Thomasin gives a philosophical definition of milte, Freidank does not.

In addition to defining the nature of milte, Freidank also deals with its role in the conduct of human affairs. First of all, milte plays an important role in friendship. Like Thomasin, Freidank notes

that the rich man who shares his wealth is assured of many friends (40, 17f.). More importantly, however, milte serves to foster and perpetuate the bond of friendship: "Swâ guot ein friunt dem andern gît,/ dâ hebet sich friuntschaft wider strît." (97, 4f.) This "Spruch" calls to mind Thomasin's assertion that a man rejoices when he receives a gift from his friend, not only because the gift is a token of the bond which unites the two but also because the recipient is then in a position to reciprocate by giving even more than he has received. Freidank's words suggest that each friend constantly seeks to assure the welfare of the other by giving, then receiving, then giving even more, in an unbroken, self-perpetuating cycle of good will.

On a larger scale, milte is a desirable and necessary trait of a ruler: "Milte machet werdiu lant;/ von obeze wirt der boum erkant." (86, 20f.) Just as the quality of a tree is judged by the fruit it bears, so, too, is the reputation of a country judged by the liberality of its ruler.[33] That Freidank chooses to measure the fame and honor of a land according to the generosity of its ruler rather than by some other standard such as justice points to the importance which he ascribes to milte as an attribute of a lord. At another juncture of the work he states that the prince who is ruled by his material possessions is unfit to reign (56, 15f.). These statements imply what Thomasin says more explicitly about the liberality of a ruler. If he is generous, his kingdom will prosper because the life of his subjects is made pleasant by his goodness to them.

2. Freidank's concept of greed. It is clear both from Freidank's definition of milte and from the role which the poet ascribes to it that he holds this virtue in high regard. But the importance of milte in the poet's hierarchy of values becomes even more evident in the "Sprüche" in which Freidank discusses its opposite, the vice of greed. Freidank, like Thomasin, does not limit himself to unmasking the thoroughly evil and destructive nature of greed; he consciously juxtaposes the warm and loving attitude of milte to the cold and selfish attitude of gîtecheit or erge in order to reveal the true essence of each.

As Eifler observes, it is somewhat difficult to determine the exact meaning which the poet assigns to the terms gîtecheit and erge because each has both a general and a specific meaning. According to Eifler, the term gîtecheit "vereinigt . . . in sich den allgemeinen Sinn von 'gierigkeit' mit dem spezialisierten, auf die Begierde nach materiellem Besitz beschränkten von 'habsucht'."[34] The term erge has a somewhat similar meaning:

> Das Mhd. W.B. nennt für erge die Bedeutungen "böses, hartherzigkeit, kargheit", die in dieser Reihenfolge betrachtet von der größten Allgemeinheit (nämlich Unsittlichkeit schlechthin) bis zu einem speziellen Laster (Kargheit, Geiz) reichen.[35]

Eifler correctly states that only the context in which each of these terms appears can enable us to determine whether Freidank uses the word in its general or specialized meaning. It is clear, however, that Freidank regards both gîtecheit and erge as vices. Moreover,

just as milte is not so much a concrete action as it is an attitude, gîtecheit and erge refer not only to the wrong use of material goods but also to a wrong attitude towards one's possessions:

> Das subjektive, persönliche Verhalten der Menschen zu dem objektiven, sachlichen Gut des Besitzes steht jetzt in Frage: Wenn da zwischen gut und schlecht unterschieden wird, so hat die Unterscheidung mit dem Wert des Besitzes als solches nichts zu tun, sondern sie betrifft ausschließlich den Charakter, die Gesinnung und die Handlungsweise der Menschen.[36]

Freidank mentions the attitude of greed in several passages in which he enumerates the most prevalent ills of contemporary society. He notes, for example, "Hôchvart, unminne, gîtekeit,/ der ieglich nû die krône treit." (29, 10f.) At another juncture of the work he observes, "Girheit, frâz mit huore/ deist nû der werlde fuore." (31, 14f.) In each of these passages the poet stresses the "nû" to indicate the severity of the problem in his time. He realizes that man has been particularly susceptible to greed from the advent of human history, but he notes with regret that it is as prevalent in the present era as it was at the time of Adam:

> Hôchvart, girheit unde nît
> diu habent noch vaste ir alten strît;
> daz schînet an Adâme;
> sus verdarp sîn reiner sâme. (28, 19ff.)

Freidank is not opposed to a proper appreciation of money and material possessions, but he is highly critical of the attitude of contemporary men towards wealth, because the exaggerated love of wealth which contributed to the original downfall of man has now taken precedence over all else:

> Swer den pfenninc liep hât,
> ze rehte, deist niht missetât;
> doch minnt man nû den pfenninc
> für alliu werltlîchiu dinc. (147, 23ff.)

The attitude of greed, then, can be defined as the tendency to value material goods more than body and soul, more than friendship, love and honor, and even more than God Himself.[37] Thus it is not surprising that Freidank regards greed as the foundation upon which every other form of unethical conduct rests: "Swer gîtekeit und erge hât,/ deist gruntvest aller missetât." (91, 2f.) Eifler correctly analyzes the significance of these lines:

> Habsucht und Geiz machen, nach Freidanks Auffassung und Erfahrung, den Menschen zu jeder Übeltat fähig und sind deshalb schwere Laster, die der Hoffart an Verwerflichkeit kaum nachstehen.[38]

It is precisely because greed contains the seed from which all other evils inevitably spring that Freidank speaks of this vice with particular contempt.

Because the vice of greed attributes exaggerated importance to material goods, it constantly seeks to acquire even more than it already possesses. Like Thomasin, Freidank repeatedly stresses the insatiable nature of greed; like Thomasin, he also depicts the vicious circle in which the greedy individual, devoid of wisdom and sound judgment, becomes entrapped. The more such a man acquires, the more he loves possessions: "So der man ie mê gewinnet,/ so er'z guot ie sêrer minnet." (56, 3f.) (See also 14, 18ff.; 69, 5ff.; 112, 7f.) It is clear that such a man lacks wisdom, because he fails to realize

that he can never attain the total satiation which he seeks; his heart is "ein übel sac" which no one is able to fill (112, 9f.).[39] Moreover, by his greed he drives God from His rightful dwelling place. Instead of turning his thoughts to God, the greedy individual strives after a lesser good; thus his heart is doomed to permanent dissatisfaction.[40]

The consequences of greed are most evident in the "Sprüche" in which Freidank contrasts milte and erge. First of all, greed has a negative effect on the individual who is gripped by this vice:

> Der karge dem schatze dienen muoz,
> im enwirt doch niemer sorgen buoz;
> so ist der milte wol gemuot,
> dem dienet schatz und ander guot. (87, 2ff.)

The greedy man is a slave of his wealth - a thought which occurs more than once in Freidank's work.[41] He is also a slave of anxiety. On the one hand, he is constantly worried about the possibility of losing what he already possesses; on the other, he is perpetually concerned with acquiring even more than he already has. The liberal man, in contrast, is the master of his fortune and of his state of mind. Because he is not emotionally attached to his possessions he uses them as they are meant to be used, and he does not suffer but remains happy when he parts with them.[42] This "Spruch" also reveals another idea which is deeply rooted in the Bescheidenheit: Correct ethical conduct, in addition to having spiritual consequences, has practical consequences as well. The greedy man makes his life burdensome and miserable by his addiction to possessions, whereas the liberal

man enjoys tranquility and peace of mind. As Eifler observes:

> Die . . . ethische Verurteilung der Laster Habsucht und Geiz findet sich ergänzt in der empirisch-praktischen Betrachtung, nach der sie gleichfalls zu verwerfen sind, weil sie das Leben in lästiger Weise erschweren; wie schon oft stellt Freidank auch hier fest: Das sittlich Unrechte ist auch praktisch verkehrt, das Böse schadet auch.[43]

Greed adversely affects the individual, and it also has negative consequences for society as a whole: "Reiniu milte nie verdarp,/ sô erge manege schande erwarp." (87, 16f.) Although Freidank does not specify the evils which result from avarice, it is clear, as we noted above, that he views this vice as the source of every form of unethical conduct. Genuine milte, in contrast, is not destructive nor has it ever been destroyed. This statement reveals that the liberal man is never harmed by his selfless actions, i.e., "daß die Wahrung des an den Bedürfnissen und Erfordernissen des Lebens gemessenen Eigeninteresses vereinbar sei mit sittlicher Haltung."[44] Once again the poet stresses the compatibility of correct ethical conduct with practical considerations. The same thought is expressed in the "Spruch" which perhaps best explains Freidank's aversion to greed as well as his predilection for milte: "Den milten nieman kan gedrôn,/ si hânt hie lop, vor gote ir lôn." (87, 14f.) The liberal man fulfills the purpose of his existence as that purpose is expressed by the greatest writers of the era - by Wolfram in the closing lines of Parzival, by Walther in the first stanza of the "Reichston", and by others. He fulfills the law of God while at the same time earning

the praise and recognition of the world:

> Die Vereinigung des göttlichen Gebotes mit weltlichen Lebensnotwendigkeiten (lop und êre) ist möglich in der reinen, rehten milte. Wer sich in der aus freiem Willen gern geübten Tugend der Freigebigkeit selbst überwindet und dem anderen, bedürftigen Menschen zuwendet, was er sich selbst vernünftigerweise absparen kann, wer also - mit einem anderen Worte Freidanks ausgedrückt - ûf der erde rehte tuot, der findet auch im Himmel Anerkennung (daz dunkt ouch dâ ze himele guot).[45]

3. Summary. Although Freidank does not deal with the virtue of milte as systematically and exhaustively as does Thomasin, a very clear definition of this concept does emerge from his work. First of all, milte is a manifestation of bescheidenheit. It is correct ethical conduct, based on wisdom and sound judgment, in the use of money and material possessions. From this definition it follows that the element of mâze is an inherent feature of milte. Giving to the extent of self-impoverishment reveals a lack of good judgment, not only because the giver robs himself of future opportunities to be generous but also because he harms himself by his extravagance.

Secondly, milte is an attitude. Because Freidank regards the attitude or will of the individual as the basis of ethical conduct, milte is primarily the readiness or predisposition to give of one's resources for the benefit of others or simply to give good will if one has nothing else to offer. Freidank, like Thomasin, regards milte as the manifestation of "guoten willen" or "rîchen muot"; almost all of his "Sprüche" which deal with milte stress the attitude of the giver, which alone determines whether or not the act of generosity may be regarded as genuine milte.

According to Freidank, milte is an ideal means of fostering and perpetuating friendship. In addition, when it is exercised by a ruler it brings honor to his land and enhances the life of his people. For these reasons Freidank holds milte in high regard, while he views the vice of greed with notable contempt. For Freidank, greed is the origin of every other evil which exists in the world. It is by its very nature destructive, insatiable and wholly lacking in judgment. Even though Freidank, unlike Thomasin, does not explicitly state that greed is characterized by its cold nature, all of his statements about this vice imply that it is so.

If we compare Thomasin's pronouncements on milte and erge to those of Freidank, we find that there is a remarkable similarity both in their definitions of these concepts and in their attitudes towards them. Although Freidank more than Thomasin stresses the necessity of making a sacrifice when giving, and although he places greater emphasis on the compatibility of selfless giving and the ability to meet the practical exigencies of life, his definition of milte is synonymous with that of Thomasin. Moreover, he clearly values milte in the same way that Thomasin does; and he, too, stresses the same aspects of the vice of greed that his predecessor stresses. For both men, greed is the object of emphatic condemnation.

Thus far we have seen that the authors who write in two different didactic genres - the longer didactic treatise and the shorter "Sprechspruch" - express similar thoughts about milte and erge. We will now

turn our attention to the didactic genre of "Sangspruch" in order to determine the extent to which its major representatives share the same view of milte and erge which we have thus far witnessed in courtly didactic literature.

C. Milte in the Genre of "Sangspruch"

In addition to dealing with the concepts of milte and erge as they occur in the "Sangspruch" written at the height of the courtly period, we will also consider their occurrence in the didactic poetry of the preceding and following generations. There is an important reason for proceeding in this manner. In the poetry of three generations - those of Herger and Spervogel, Walther von der Vogelweide, and Reinmar von Zweter - we find a microcosm of the history of milte. We witness its transformation from a synonym for the mere act of giving to the more complex concept of "richer muot", and we also begin to understand in part why this new, courtly definition is later destined to vanish from the language as greed becomes an ever more frequent object of criticism in didactic literature. We also see that although the "Sangspruchdichter" of the courtly period retain some elements of the precourtly definition of milte, their basic understanding of the meaning of this concept does not differ substantially from all that we have seen in other works of didactic literature.

1. Herger and Spervogel. Of the two poets whose work appears under the name of "Spervogel" in the great "Liederhandschriften" A,

C and J, Herger is known to be the older. The verse in which he laments the death of Walther von Hausen (ca. 1123-1170) leads scholars to conclude that Herger wrote between the years 1150 and 1180.[46] From his poetry emerges the picture of an aging man who owns no property and enjoys few material blessings. In order to realize the extent to which Herger was beset by material concerns during his lifetime, we have only to recall the poignant lines in which he addresses his sons, entrusting them to the care of divine providence because he has neither "lêhen" nor "eigen" to leave to them (25, 13ff.).[47] From his own experience Herger knows the harsh and bitter contrast between "wirt" and "gast":

> der wirt hât truckenen fuoz
> vil dicke, sô der gast muoz
> die herberge rûmen. (27, 8ff.)

Thus it is not surprising that the recurrent lament in his poetry stems from his failure as a young man to make provisions for his comfort and security in old age:

> daz ich ze bûwe niht engreif,
> dô mir begonde entspringen
> von alrêrste mîn bart!
> des muoz ich nû mit arbeiten ringen. (26, 30ff.)

No fewer than four of his "Sprüche" urge his audience either directly or indirectly to avoid this plight (26, 20ff.; 26, 27ff.; 26, 34ff; 27, 6ff.).

Because Herger was a traveling poet whose well-being depended upon the generosity of his patrons - generosity which he quite obviously seldom received - , the concept of milte figures prominently

in his "Sprüche". But if we consider the context in which milte appears in his writings, it becomes evident that the word means something very different than it does in the works of Thomasin, Freidank and other authors of later generations. For Herger, milte is not the attitude of "rîcher muot" but merely the act of giving. Moreover, it serves two basic purposes: to assure the well-being - and indeed the very survival - of the poet, and to enhance the external honor of the giver. The concept of milte occurs in Herger's "Sprüche" only in verses in which the poet recalls lavish givers of a bygone era and in "Bittstrophen", where it is synonymous with "Lohn" in the "Dienst-Lohn" relationship.

Herger's verses reflect great admiration for liberal givers. In the poem in which the impoverished writer informs his sons that he has nothing whatever to bequeath to them, he concludes with the words, "vil wol gelanc von Tenemarke Fruote." (25, 19) As Carl von Kraus observes, Fruote is the destitute hero who wins great riches by virtue of his strength and then generously distributes his newly-acquired wealth to others:

> Als einer, der es durch eigene Kraft zu Reichtum gebracht hat, ist Fruote ein treffliches Vorbild für die Söhne des Dichters. Als einer, der seinen selbsterworbenen Reichtum freigebig austeilte, ist er zugleich ein Vorbild für die besitzenden Herren: so stellte ein und derselbe Mann das Ideal der Lebensführung in beiden Lagen dar.[48]

Herger also admires the trait of generosity in the patrons whose deaths he laments:

Mich riuwet Fruot von über mer,
und von Hûsen Walther,
Heinrîch von Gebechenstein,
und von Stoufen noch ein.
got gnâde Wernharte,
der ûf Steinesberc saz
und niht vor den êren versparte. (25, 20ff.)

Kraus seems to question Gustav Roethe's assertion that Herger chose the names mentioned in lines 21-23 because of their sound symbolism ("hûs", "gebe" and "stouf" as representative of shelter, clothing and food);[49] but even if Roethe has read too much into the significance of these names, it is apparent that all of the figures mentioned in the poem are included because they were known for their milte, i.e., for their acts of giving. Herger calls special attention to Wernhart, who never diminished his honor by withholding his generosity. The honor spoken of here is the fame and recognition which a patron gains by his lavish giving. Such behavior assures him that his fame will be spread by traveling poets such as Herger, who are the recipients of his rewards.

Wernhart's liberality is the subject of two other "Sprüche" by Herger; in both, milte is also defined as the concrete act of giving. The poet praises Wernhart, who was generous from the moment of his birth ("Dô der guote Wernhart/ an dise werlt geboren wart,/ do begonde er teilen al sîn guot," 25, 34ff.); and he compares him to Ruedeger (26, 2), whose name is synonymous with boundless giving. Herger can scarcely conceal his enthusiasm for Wernhart as he exclaims, "hei wie er gab unde lêch!" (25, 29) That Wernhart's generosity, like that of Ruedeger, knew no bounds is implicit in the

statement "des er dem biderben man verzêch,/ des enmóhte er niht gewinnen." (25, 30f.) In all these quotations the accent is undeniably on "geben" and "teilen".

That Herger defines milte as an action is also evident in his "Bittstrophen". At times he is most direct in demanding an appropriate reward for services rendered, as the following "Spruch" reveals:

> Korn sâte ein bûman:
> do enwolde ez niht ûf gân.
> ime erzornete daz:
> ein ander jâr er sich vermaz
> daz erz en egerde lieze.
> er solde ez im güetlîche geben,
> der dem ándern umb sîn dienest iht gehieze. (30, 6ff.)

The farmer in this poem is the poet himself, and the seed that he sows is a song in praise of his patron. But the seed has not borne fruit, i.e., the poet has not received the promised reward for his service. If the reward is not forthcoming, the poet will no longer sing the praises of the man who has failed to keep his word. In the context of this poem, milte is synonymous with "Lohn"; it has none of the subtle connotations attributed to it by writers of the following generations.

Herger defines erge in the same way that he defines milte: not as an abstract concept, the evils of which are discussed in a detached and theoretical manner, but as a concrete form of behavior, i.e., as the failure or refusal of a patron to reward the poet for services rendered. The forcefulness of Herger's demands for reward stems from his own needs as well as from his awareness that greed has become a predominant attribute of many a lord: "die hêrren sint erarget." (27, 3)

Herger also expresses this awareness in another "Spruch". His hunger compels him to climb into a garden where he repeatedly shakes the branch of a tree without obtaining the desired fruit: "mir wart des obezes nie niht ze teile." (29, 19) That it was greed which prevented him from receiving the fruit, i.e., an appropriate reward, is made clear in the following related "Spruch":

> Swâ ein guot boum stât
> und zweier hande obez hât,
> beidiu süeze unde sûr,
> so sprichet ein sîn nâhgebûr
> 'wir suln daz obez teilen:
> wirt ir einez drunder fûl,
> ez bringet uns daz ander ze leide.' (29, 20ff.)

Both Kraus and Bodo Mergell stress the significance of the concluding lines. The poet subtly reminds his patron that it is better to give away half the fruit than to let all of it rot because of greed.[50]

Much of what we have seen thus far recurs in the poetry of Spervogel.[51] He, like Herger, knows the hardships of poverty as well as the contrast between "wirt" and "gast". In a poem which begins "Sô wê dir armüete!" (22, 9), he vividly portrays the power of poverty, which robs the individual of "witze" and "sin". In another poem he contrasts the enviable position of the "wirt", who enjoys a life of comfort, to that of the wandering poet, who lacks security and well-being as long as he has no patron to sustain him (22, 17ff.). It is therefore understandable that his treatment of milte and erge is similar to Herger's treatment of these concepts.

Milte appears in a general didactic context in only one of Spervogel's "Sprüche". When the poet addresses his audience with the

words "swem daz guot ze herzen gât, der gwinnet niemer êre" (22, 5f.), he recommends milte as a desirable virtue to be exercised by all men; and he quickly adds that he is not speaking in the interest of personal gain: "jo enrede ichz niht dur mînen frumen . . . ." (22, 7). In the four other poems in which milte appears, however, it is treated within the context of the "Dienst-Lohn" relationship. Spervogel subtly appeals to his audience that he be given the proper reward for his services.

Typical of these four poems is the following:

> Diu saelde dringet für die kunst, daz ellen gât
> vil dicke nâch dem rîchen zagen in swacher wât.
> erst tump, swer guot vor êren spart.
> zühte wellent grâwen bart,
> triuwe machent werden man und wîsen schoene frâge.
> liebe meistert wol den kouf: sô scheidet schade
> die mâge. (21, 29ff.)

Otto Ludwig aptly interprets its meaning. Both sections of the poem (lines 29-31 and 32ff.) deal with the relationship of material goods to external honor. The first section builds to a climax in the third line. Whereas the first two lines merely offer general observations, the third states a rule of conduct: The man who withholds his goods at the cost of his honor is a fool. He should, in other words, use his material blessings to increase his honor and recognition.[52] The second section of the poem reinforces this message:

> Um zu Ansehen (êre) zu gelangen, bedarf es zunächst der angeführten Tugenden, der zuht, der triuwe, der schoenen frâge und der liebe. Doch sie allein genügen nicht. Es muß noch die alte Tugend der Freigebigkeit hinzukommen. Denn wo diese fehlt, weil der Herr guot vor êren spart,

> da scheidet schade die mâge. Die zweite Reihe, gipfelnd in ihrem letzten Glied (V. 36), macht also auf mögliche Folgen mangelnder Freigebigkeit aufmerksam.[53]

Thus Spervogel tactfully informs his lord "daß, wenn sein Dienst nicht belohnt wird, er sich für einen Toren halten müsse und seine Dienste bei ihm bereuen werde."[54]

In this poem, as in the three remaining poems which deal with milte (20, 9ff.; 21, 5ff.; 21, 13ff.),[55] the concept is defined as the giving of tangible goods in exchange for service. Likewise, erge is the failure to bestow an appropriate reward. At stake is not only the material well-being of the poet but also the external honor, fame and reputation of the giver. To be sure, Spervogel is far more indirect than Herger in requesting that his patron be generous to him - an indirectness which can be attributed to the fact that he is writing for a more courtly audience than his predecessors.[56] But despite the greater sophistication of his audience, his definitions of these concepts in no way differ from those of Herger. Both men use the terms in ways which are common of the precourtly and early courtly period.

2. Walther von der Vogelweide. In much of the poetry of Walther von der Vogelweide we witness the recurrence of the traditional definition and treatment of milte. Because Walther, like Herger and Spervogel, is an itinerant poet, he is necessarily dependent upon the generosity of patrons for his sustenance. As Leonora Beirer observes, "Er ist der Sänger, der den größten Teil seines Lebens im Dienste und

in der Gunst anderer verbringen mußte. Er war auf 'milte' angewiesen, oft mußte er darben."[57] In her discussion of the concept of milte in the writings of Thomasin and Walther, Beirer rightly stresses the frequency with which Walther defines milte in accordance with tradition. At the same time, however, she erroneously contends that there is little, if any, correspondence between Walther's definition of milte and the courtly definition of this virtue as articulated by Thomasin. Beirer asserts that Walther changes his definition, thereby making it resemble Thomasin's courtly definition, only when he is an old man, and then only in the poem "Rechte Milte".[58] But even this poem, she argues, illustrates the wide gulf which separates the thinking of the two men: "Für Thomasin bedeuten die Ausführungen über die 'milte' Forderung, Belehrung, für Walther aber besagt L 104,33-105,2 erkämpftes und durchseeltes Gut."[59] If we carefully analyze his "Sprüche", we see that Walther is very much in tune with the courtly concept of milte, because in many instances he defines and treats this virtue as do Thomasin, Freidank and other authors of the courtly period. In order to understand the wide range of meaning and usage which milte has in Walther's poetry, we must consider the concept both in its traditional and in its courtly context.

Like Herger and Spervogel, Walther repeatedly complains about his insecure and somewhat precarious existence. He laments the contrast between "wirt" and "gast" in a manner that is reminiscent of his predecessors, except that he elaborates on the consequences of this contrast at greater length:

"Sit willekomen, her wirt", dem gruoze muoz ich swigen:
"sit willkomen, her gast", so muoz ich sprechen oder nigen.
wirt unde heim sint zwene unschameliche namen,
gast unde hereberge muoz man sich vil dicke schamen.
Noch müez ich geleben daz ich den gast ouch grüeze,
daz er mir same dem wirte danken müeze. ("Unmutston" 4, 1ff.)

In another poem in which Walther sings of his desire for a home of his own ("gerne wolde ich, möhte ez sin, bi eigenem fiure erwarmen," "König Friedrichs-Ton" 5, 3), he depicts the impact of poverty, insecurity and the itinerant life on his art. If only he enjoyed the security which a dwelling of his own would afford him, he would be able to sing of the birds, the meadow and the flowers as he had once sung. Now, however, he customarily arrives at his destination late at night and rides forth early in the morning. As a result of such tribulations, others can sing of joyous things better than he. Only the generosity of his patron could restore his art to its former high level. Thus he turns to Frederick with the plea, "Von Rome voget, von Pülle künec, lat iuch erbarmen/ daz man mich bi richer kunst lat alsus armen." ("König Friedrichs-Ton" 5, 1f.)

In this and in similar "Bittstrophen", as in those of Herger and Spervogel, milte is synonymous with "Lohn" in the "Dienst-Lohn" relationship. This type of milte serves several purposes. In the first place, it provides for the poet's material support. Secondly and more importantly, it gains Walther due honor and recognition at court. As Beirer notes, "Walthers Dichtung ist notwendig dadurch bestimmt, gesellschaftlich anerkannt zu werden, einem 'milten herren' zu dienen, um ritterlich belohnt zu werden."[60] An appropriate reward constitutes

an acknowledgement of the poet's status. It proves, in other words, "daß Walther mit den fahrenden Spielleuten nichts gemein habe, daß er ein Ritterbürtiger sei."[61] This demand for acknowledgement, which is largely absent from the poetry of his predecessors,[62] is best illustrated by the "Meissner-Ton", in which Walther complains about the nobleman's ingratitude for the efforts which Walther has made to restore him to the favor of Otto IV:[63]

> Der Missenaere solde
> mir wandeln, ob er wolde,
> min dienest laz ich allez varn:
> Niewan min lop aleine,
> deich in mit lobe iht meine,
> daz kan ich schone wol bewarn.
> Lob ich in, so lobe er mich . . . . ("Meissner-Ton"1, 1ff.)

Walther's central concern is expressed by the words "Lob ich in, so lobe er mich," "das heißt, habe ich ihn zu Ehren und Vorteil gebracht, so soll er mir ebenfalls zu Ehre . . . verhelfen."[64] Finally, milte as "Lohn" increases the honor and fame of the poet's patron. In another typical "Bittstrophe", Walther reminds Philip of Swabia of a reproach that is made of the ruler - a reproach which suggests that Philip is not generous by nature. Walther urges him to give liberally of his own accord, instructing him at the same time "wie man mit gabe erwirbet pris und ere" ("Der erste Philippston" 4, 6). The reference here is clearly to external honor: "Walther ist der Meinung, ein belohnter Sänger werde den 'milten herren' am sichersten zu Ansehen bringen."[65]

Like his predecessors, Walther frequently complains about the failure of his patrons to provide him with an adequate reward for his

services. The "Meissner-Ton" serves as an appropriate example of such a complaint (see above). But perhaps the most poignant of these laments is the one which he addresses to the Court of Vienna. Walther contrasts the treatment of others to the treatment which he himself has received. The prince has distributed costly gifts as if his life were about to end. Walther alone has received nothing:

> Mir ist verspart der saelden tor,
> da sten ich als ein weise vor:
> mich hilfet niht swaz ich dar an geklopfe.
> Wie möht ein wunder groezer sin:
> ez regent bedenhalben min,
> daz mir des alles niht enwirt ein tropfe. ("Wiener Hofton" 7, 1ff.)

In the tradition of Herger and Spervogel, Walther also occasionally suggests that his songs of praise will end if the generosity of his patron is not forthcoming. Sometimes he is courteous and indirect in his admonitions, as in the "Meissner-Ton", when he assures his patron that he will not discontinue his service if he finally receives an appropriate reward:

> Het er mir do gelonet baz
> ich dient im aber eteswaz,
> noch kan ich schaden vertriben. ("Meissner-Ton" 2, 7ff.)

At other times, however, he is harsh and even sardonic in his complaints, particularly when uncourtly individuals receive preferential treatment and he is ignored. When, for example, his courteous songs fail to bring about the desired recognition, Walther decides to pursue "herren guot und wibes gruoz" in a manner which he himself terms "gewalteclich und ungezogenlich" ("Unmutston" 2, 3f.). Likewise, he is caustic and uncompromising in his criticism of Otto, who no longer

favors him. Measured with the yardstick of milte, Otto is "miltes muotes minre vil dan ein getwerc." ("König Friedrichs-Ton" 7, 6)

Walther, like Herger, is lavish in his praise of liberal men. When, for example, he measures young King Frederick against the no longer generous Otto, he portrays the king as a veritable giant of milte who has the potential for even further growth ("König Friedrichs-Ton" 7). Likewise, he describes the Kärntner as "milter fürste und marterer umb ere", blaming the cessation of the ruler's generosity not on the Kärntner but on parasitic courtiers who have maligned Walther's good name and thus turned this paragon of liberality against him ("Unmutston" 6). The Landgraf of Thuringia receives Walther's highest accolades for his milte: While other princes are also liberal, they are not as constant in their exercise of this virtue as is the nobleman. Hence Walther says of him, "der Dürnge bluome schinet dur den sne./ sumer und winter blüet sin lop als in den ersten jaren." ("Unmutston" 15, 9f.) These and many other figures are the subject of Walther's praise, precisely because they show him their favor in the form of gifts and recognition.

In all these instances - the depiction of trying personal circumstances, the requests for generosity, and the praise of lavish givers - milte is defined in the same way that it had typically been defined in precourtly and early courtly literature: as the concrete act of giving. In fact, we find in Walther's "Sangspruch" the full range of the traditional meaning and usage of milte. We see the word used as a conventional attribute of a lord, as when the poet praises Otto with

the words "waz widerstüende ir manheit und ir milte?" ("Ottenton" 2, 12) - a recurrent formula in the literature of previous generations. We also witness its occurrence as an attribute of God, whom Walther beseeches to look "uz siner milte", i.e. mercifully upon the righteous on Judgment Day ("König Friedrichs-Ton" 3, 2). In none of these cases does milte appear in the new, courtly sense of the word. In other "Sprüche", however, it becomes unmistakably apparent that Walther has gone beyond tradition in his treatment of this virtue.

In the poem "Rechte Milte", Walther stresses the same elements of liberality which Thomasin emphasizes. He begins by acknowledging the inherent difficulty in being milte in the true sense of the word: "Daz milter man gar warhaft si,/ geschiht daz, da ist wunder bi." To genuine milte belongs "der groze wille", i.e., a readiness to be generous which is not prompted by outside forces but which comes from within. These words recall Thomasin and Freidank's insistence that milte is an attitude rather than a concrete action, and that this attitude depends upon one's inner disposition rather than one's gift. Further elements of milte are "witze" and "list":

> Des war da hoeret witze zuo
> und wachen gegen dem morgen fruo
> und anders manec schoener list
> daz ez iht werde erwendet. ("Rechte Milte", lines 5ff.)

With these words Walther refers to the concept of bescheidenheit or wisdom and sound judgment, on which genuine milte must be based. Generosity must also be exercised "ane riuwe", because giving with regret is antithetical to the true spirit of milte. The man who is

liberal according to this definition will enjoy "lange wernden eren". Although these words refer to the fame and recognition which the liberal man receives, it is important to note that within the context of this poem such external honor is not based solely upon the distribution of material goods. Instead, honor is accorded the "milter man" because of his practice of virtue, because of his perfect realization of an ideal which is admittedly difficult to attain. In accordance with the spirit of the times, Walther is speaking about the outer recognition which is based upon inner merit and integrity.

The nature of milte and its relationship to honor are revealed in two other "Sprüche". The first of these is the "Bogener-Ton", which ends with the following words:

> Den diemant den edeln stein
> gap mir der schoensten ritter ein,
> ane bete wart mir diu gabe sine:
> Jo lob ich niht nach dem schoenen schine.
> milter man ist schoene und wol gezogen;
> Man sol die inre tugende uz keren,
> so ist daz uzer lop nach eren,
> sam des von Katzenellenbogen. ("Bogener-Ton" 12)

Although Walther begins this stanza by acknowledging the value of the gift which he has received, he insists that the praise of his benefactor is not based upon externals: neither upon the gift itself nor upon the handsome appearance and good manners of the giver. Lines six and seven express his central concern. One should let inner virtue manifest itself outwardly, and the giving of gifts is a means of doing so. In other words, the gift is an outward sign of the inner attitude of milte. Praise of this inner attitude (as opposed to praise of ex-

ternals) is the highest form of praise. A similar thought is expressed in the "Unmutston", in which Walther declares that women should be praised for their beauty, while such praise ill befits men. A man must possess other qualities in order to merit recognition: "küene und milte, und daz er da zuo staete si,/ sost er vil gar gelobt . . . ." ("Unmutston" 16, 3f.) Once again Walther focuses upon the correct and worthiest form of recognition:

> Wilz iu niht versmahen, so wil ichz iuch leren,
> wie wir loben suln und niht uneren.
> ir müezet in die liute sehen, welt ir erkennen wol.
> nieman uzen nach der varwe loben sol:
> vil manic more ist innen tugende vol. ("Unmutston" 16, 5ff.)

Walther is more interested in the essence of a man than in the outward appearance; in fact, to judge a man by externals is to dishonor him. Walther insists that we must look to the inner man, where virtue resides, and that it is above all inner virtue which must be accorded recognition. Implicit in this stanza is the assumption that milte is an inner quality rather than an outward action.

In addition to defining milte and dealing with its relationship to honor, Walther tells his audience what milte is not. Like Thomasin, he states that wastefulness has nothing to do with genuine liberality. The Landgraf of Thuringia, who receives the highest praises for his generosity in the "Unmutston", is denounced for his immoderation and extravagance in the first "Philippston". Walther contrasts him to Saladin and Richard the Lion-Hearted, both of whom he regards as models of genuine milte, in the following manner:

> Der lantgrave ist so gemuot,
> daz er mit stolzen helden sine habe vertuot,
> der iegeslicher wol ein kenpfe waere.
> Mir ist sin hohiu fuore kunt:
> und gulte ein fuoder guotes wines tusent pfunt,
> da stüende ouch niemer ritters becher laere.
> ("Der erste Philippston" 5, 7ff.)

Walther also warns the individual against giving "swes er niht müge uz geborgen/ noch selbe enhabe" ("Bogener-Ton" 8, 7f.). Like Thomasin, he indicates that such giving is contrary to the spirit of milte because it either impoverishes the individual or forces him to acquire goods by illicit means:

> Swelch herre nieman niht versaget,
> der ist an gebender kunst verschraget,
> der muoz iemer notic sin ald triegen. ("Bogener-Ton",
> 8, 1ff.)

His advice to the poor man who wishes to be liberal - "geheize minner unde grüeze baz" - calls to mind Thomasin's admonition that the man who has no goods to give should give the gift of "rîcher muot".

Walther's understanding of the courtly concept of milte is also revealed implicitly but nonetheless clearly in his "Sprüche" which deal with the relationship of "êre", "varnde guot" and "gotes hulde". We witness his interest in this relationship as early as 1198 in the first stanza of the "Reichston" which, as Maurer notes, is dedicated to one of the central concerns of the Christian knight: "die ethische Ordnung im menschlichen Leben".[66] Walther poses the question "wie man zer welte solte leben" and then becomes more specific by asking "wie man driu dinc erwurbe/ der keines niht verdurbe" ("Reichston" 1, 7ff.). He would like to see material possessions, worldly honor and - most importantly - God's favor residing harmoniously and coequally in

the human heart; but he declares that such an ideal is impossible to attain. In this poem he points to the deterioration of justice as the cause of conflict between the three. But when he returns to this problem in later "Sprüche", he clearly attributes the conflict to the phenomenon of avarice.

In the "Wiener Hofton" Walther mentions material goods as one of many gifts which God has given His creatures. But he observes that many a man dishonors himself by his attitude towards those goods:

> Dem einen git er schoenen sin,
> dem andern guot und den gewin,
> daz er sich mit sin selbes muote swachet.
> Den armen man mit guoten sinnen
> sol man für den richen minnen,
> ob er eren niht engert. ("Wiener Hofton" 3, 4ff.)

Walther is alluding to greed in these lines. That he defines it as an attitude is evident from his use of the words "sin" and "muote". It is not the possession of worldly goods on which he focuses but the individual's attitude towards them. Walther, like Thomasin, insists that the poor man who has good intentions or a right attitude is more deserving of honor than the rich man. The words "schoenen sin" and "guoten sinnen" can be equated with Thomasin's expression "rîcher muot". Walther further observes that all the world strives after "gotes hulde" and "êre". To this neutral observation he adds a warning: The selling of oneself to possessions, i.e., to the vice of greed, makes the attainment of these two goals impossible:

> swer sich so ze guote gepflihtet
> daz er der beider wirt entwert,
> dern habe ouch hie noch dort niht lones mere;
> er si guotes hie gewert. ("Wiener Hofton" 3, 12ff.)

Just as the man who commits sin or acts shamefully for the sake of wealth is a fool, so, too, is the individual who regards such a man as wise:

> er tore, er dunket mich niht wise
> und ouch der sin ere prise,
> ich waen si beide toren sint. ("Wiener Hofton" 4, 11ff.)

In this denunciation of the greedy man and his admirers we witness once again Walther's insistence that a man be judged on the basis of his inner worth rather than on the basis of externals.

Walther's denunciation of excessive attachment to material goods is most strongly expressed in the "Unmutston":

> Ich han gemerket von der Seine unz an die Muore,
> von dem Pfade unz an die Traben erkenne ich al ir fuore.
> diu meiste menege enruochet wies erwirbet guot:
> sol ichz also gewinnen, so ganc slafen, hoher muot!
> ("Unmutston" 3, 1ff.)

It is noteworthy that the expression "hoher muot" appears as "hovescher muot" in Manuscript A. In either case, Walther's meaning is quite clear. Where greed prevails, where men are indifferent to the means by which they pursue wealth, where the end justifies illicit means, true courtliness cannot exist. The poet who has traveled much and observed a great deal that is not to his liking contrasts a bygone era of honor and integrity to a present in which greed has become a prevalent and corrupting force:

> Guot was ie genaeme, iedoch so gie diu ere
> vor dem guote: nust daz guot so here,
> daz ez gewaltecliche vor ir zuo den frowen gat,
> mit den fürsten zuo den künegen an ir rat:
> so we dir guot! wie roemesch riche stat!
> ("Unmutston" 3, 5ff.)

Walther's words are prophetic in the sense that the lament which he expresses here is repeated with increasing frequency in the "Sangspruch" of the following generation.

3. Reinmar von Zweter and Bruder Wernher. At approximately the same time that Walther's poetic career was drawing to a close, the first "Sprüche" of a new generation of poets began to appear. One of the most outstanding of these poets was Reinmar von Zweter, a pupil of the aging Walther.[67] Reinmar began to write around the year 1230, and he fell silent some twenty years later, shortly before the advent of the Interregnum.[68] As a very young man he arrived at the Court of Vienna, where he met Walther during the reign of Leopold VII. He remained there after Leopold's death; but, as DeBoor observes,

> . . . mit dessen [Leopolds] Tode (1230) ging die Zeit des höfischen Glanzes in Wien zu Ende. Sein Sohn und Nachfolger, Friedrich der Streitbare, führt eine Zeit politischer und kriegerischer Wirren herauf, und soweit er literarisches Leben und höfische Geselligkeit um sich sammelt, widersprach es dem Geschmack und den aus hochhöfischem Denken genährten ethischen Begriffen Reinmars. Er verliert dort den Nährboden seiner Kunst . . . .[69]

Like Walther, Reinmar does not find a permanent place at the court in Vienna and moves on. For the next six or seven years (ca. 1235-1241) he resided at the Court of King Wenzel in Bohemia. Thereafter he wandered from place to place, no longer enjoying the security which he had known in his earlier years.

As we might expect of a poet who spent most of the years of his literary productivity at prestigious courts, Reinmar writes in a thoroughly knightly and courtly vein: "Seine Ethik ist eine durch

und durch ritterliche Ethik, weit stärker ständisch betont und höfisch bedingt als bei Thomasin oder gar Freidank."[70] His poetry reflects an overwhelming concern for the essence of courtliness and for the various courtly virtues. Although êre is clearly the predominant virtue in his writings - in the "Frauen-Ehren-Ton" we find a veritable apotheosis of honor - , Reinmar also dedicates a number of "Sprüche" to the virtue of milte, which he treats in a decidedly courtly manner.

In notable contrast to Herger, Spervogel and Walther, Reinmar does not deal with milte in the context of "Dienst-Lohn". Not a single "Bittstrophe" appears in the body of his writing. That this traditional occurrence of milte is absent from his poetry is explained not only by the greater measure of security which he enjoyed throughout much of his life but also by his social position and by his own sense of self-esteem:

> Ein auf Herrengunst angewiesener Sänger war auch er, jedoch unter die gewöhnlichen Fahrenden, die gernde diet, die weit und breit im Lande herumzog, dürfen wir Reinmar nicht rechnen: bis zum Jahre 1241, das einen sehr wichtigen Abschnitt in Reinmars Leben bildet, scheint er ununterbrochen an den Höfen von Oestreich und Böhmen gelebt zu haben; erst dann trieb ihn, gewiss sehr gegen seinen Wunsch, die Not in ein unstätes Wanderleben hinaus. Unabhängig des Urteils und vornehmes Selbstgefühl hat er sich aber stets gewahrt; auf der Strasse, wie Walther, hat er sicherlich nie gesungen. Für einen Fahrenden ist der völlige Mangel aller Bitten um Geschenke bei Reinmar auffällig . . . .[71]

In those instances when milte appears in a traditional context, i.e., when Reinmar defines milte as the giving of goods and then praises this type of generosity ("Sprüche" 116-120)[72], he does so in a detached and

theoretical manner, "dass er gar nicht selbst beteiligt scheint."[73] Only one of his late poems might possibly be construed as a request for material aid (204); but if it is indeed a "Bittstrophe", the request is carefully hidden behind a narrative about the poet's past failure to catch a big fish in "grozen wazzern", i.e., at the great courts. Moreover, this is one of the few poems in which Reinmar complains about personal tribulations.

In contrast to Herger and Walther, Reinmar seldom sings the praises of lavish givers. To be sure, he mentions milte along with zuht and êre as a desirable attribute of a lord (56); but in his poems dedicated to the praise of various noblemen, praise of their liberality is noticeably absent. In fact, in one such poem Reinmar defends a nobleman who has been maligned for lack of generosity by stating that it is impossible to satisfy the wishes of everyone (67). His statements mark a radical departure from the traditional pleas for generosity and praises for those who comply with such pleas. Reinmar's failure to praise liberal patrons can be attributed to the same reasons for his failure to compose "Bittstrophen".

Milte occurs in a traditional context in Reinmar's poetry only as a desirable attribute of a nobleman (56) and as an attribute of God (231). In all other instances Reinmar defines it in the new, courtly sense of the word. In a poem in which he complains about the uneven distribution of wealth in the world, he describes what he would do if he were in a position to remedy the situation. To the man who was "sînes guotes . . . ein rise,/ des muotes ein getwerc" he would

give nothing. But to the man who was "arm an guote" and "rîch an muote" he would be most generous: "bescheidenlîchen wold ich sprechen:/ 'man edels muotes, nû sitz ûf!'" (62, 9f.).[74] The words "rîch an muote" and "edels muots" recall Thomasin's definition of milte as "rîcher muot". That Reinmar shares Thomasin's definition of milte to act nobly and generously is clear from this poem; Reinmar implies that he would give goods to the poor but noble-spirited man so that the latter could use those goods to carry out his good intentions. In another instance the poet advises the poor but good individual to accept his poverty and to rejoice because he possesses "guotes muotes" (167, 7), a quality which Reinmar believes should be treasured above material wealth.

The identification of milte with "rîcher muot" is also evident in a poem in which Reinmar discusses the relationship of milte to êre. He notes that many a man seeks honor but adds that honor has many companions:

> Triuwe, Staete, reine Site,
> Sorge unt Schame, Kiusche, Milte unt Manheit vert ir mite,
> Dêmuot, Wârheit, Gehôrsam, des hovegesindes muoz durch nôt beviln
> Den rîchen guotes, armen an gemüete:
> des vert diu hôchgelobte süeze güete
> vil wîselôs mit ir gesinde . . . . (71, 4ff.)

Reinmar declares that honor can be accorded a man only if he possesses the courtly virtues. Thus he, like Walther and Thomasin, insists that outer recognition be based upon inner virtue and integrity. Although he mentions milte as one of many courtly virtues, he calls

special attention to it by focusing on the man who is rich in material possessions but lacks nobility and generosity of spirit. It is above all this man who does not merit recognition.

Like Thomasin, Reinmar also defines milte as a mean between two extremes. Genuine milte always observes the law of mâze: "si kan wol hengen unde haben, si kan wol halten unde lan." (120, 3) On the one hand, milte is not to be equated with waste: "Ist milte ein tugent, als man ir giht,/ sô weiz ich wol an ir, daz si lêrt guot hin werfen niht." (120, lf.) On the other hand, greed is also antithetical to milte: "der erge ist ouch ein teil ze vil." (120, 11)

By telling his audience what does not constitute true milte, Reinmar implies that two further elements belong to his definition of this virtue - elements also stressed by Thomasin and Walther. First, milte must be based upon bescheidenheit; the foolish dissipation of one's wealth is dishonorable and can only be characterized as the liberality of fools:

> Der tôren milte tôren lobent:
> die han durch tôren lop ir guot vertoerent und vertobent,
> die haben der tôren lop unt sîn dâ bî ân êre unt ane guot! (121, lff.)

Secondly, milte must be exercised willingly; if a gift is given only after much begging, the recipient feels shame:

> Swâ iuch [Vrô Milt] der gart sô wecken muoz
> dâ wirdet lazzer zungen von iu selten kumbers buoz;
> dem ungeschamten sît ir dâ, dem wolgeschamten sît ir mat. (119, 4ff.)[75]

The concept of erge plays as large a role as milte in Reinmar's poetry. Reinmar stresses the incompatibility of erge with true honor (61; 69; 74; 116), and he also discusses greed in a religious context: as one of three sins to be avoided more than any others (192) and as a certain cause of eternal damnation (192; 212). But he most frequently treats this vice when he speaks as laudator temporis acti. Reinmar mourns the disappearance of milte from contemporary society. He contrasts a corrupt and greed-ridden present to a bygone era in which genuine liberality reigned along with the other courtly virtues. Such contrasts already appear in his early poetry; but it was more than his specific problems at the Court of Vienna which prompted him to look with disfavor on the present:

> Der Regierungswechsel von 1230 gab Grund zur Sehnsucht nach dem Vergangenen. Aber es bedurfte für Reinmar gar nicht eigner Erfahrung, damit er sich zurückträumte in die Zeiten, von denen die Alten sagten. Auf der ganzen Generation lastete bleischwer die unheimliche Ahnung des Sinkens und Verfallens: das Rittertum, die höfische Zucht hatte sich überlebt . . . . [76]

The problem of erge was one of many symptoms of the imminent decline of the courtly ideals and the courtly way of life which Reinmar so greatly cherished.

At times Reinmar is calm and objective in depicting the contrast between past and present in relationship to milte and erge. He observes, for example, that "der biderbe man" was once rewarded for his goodness with "dienste" and with "gruoze", i.e., with material sustenance and recognition based on personal merit. Now, however, such a

man receives nothing. Furthermore, milte as "rîcher muot" is becoming a thing of the past because of the obstacles that stand in its way: "Hie vor dô hulfen hundert eime guotes,/ nû irrent tûsent einen guotes muotes." (66, 7f.)[77] The lament about the disappearance of milte which Walther had expressed so vividly in the "Unmutston" (see above) is calmly echoed in another of Reinmar's "Sprüche" which depicts the situation of "verkehrte Welt":

> Wir haben nû êre dinge vil,
> diu wîlent laster hiezen, als ich iuch bescheiden wil:
> man heizet karkeit witze und lobt den man, swie er
> gewinnet guot. (112, 1ff.)

The virtue of milte, for which a man was once accorded honor, is now the object of mockery and scorn (112, 7).

But along with these objective observations we also find emotional outcries about excessive attachment to wealth. Reinmar indignantly exclaims that even the man who already enjoys prosperity is willing to resort to wicked conduct for the sake of acquiring still greater wealth:

> Her Phenninc, daz nû nieman lebet sô rîche,
> ern tuo durch iuwern willen lasterlîche!
> daz müeze Got von himel erbarmen! (61, 7ff.)

The poet's vehement invocation of the Anti-Christ in a later poem indicates that the problem of erge could not possibly be worse. The desire for possessions has become so powerful a force in the lives of men that they are willing to forsake their Christian faith and all else that they should hold sacred in order to satisfy that desire:

> Wes sûmestû dich, Endecrist,
> daz dû niht kumst, sît al diu werlt sô gar schazgîtec ist?

nû hâstû doch ze gebenne, des si dâ gert. Gip ir! si gît sich dir.
Dun vunde nie sô guoten kouf,
sô nû: dun darft niht vürhten den gelouben noch den touf:
ez ist ir allez veile: sô gar sô stât nâch guote ir herzen gir. (134, 1ff.)[78]

The recurrent denunciation of greed within the context of *laudatio temporis acti* - a denunciation which culminates in an apocalyptic outcry - clearly points to the waning of the courtly virtue of *milte* in Reinmar's era.

Reinmar is by no means the only "Spruchdichter" of his generation who expresses serious concern about the decline of *milte* and the prevalence of greed in his times. The poet Bruder Wernher fully shares his concern. We will briefly consider Wernher's treatment of *milte* and *erge* not only because it is representative of the times in which he writes but also because it has not been dealt with accurately in important works of secondary literature.

Like Reinmar, Wernher writes between the years 1230 and 1250. He, too, is a pupil of Walther who begins his career at the Court of Vienna under Leopold VII and Leopold's successor Frederick. But in contrast to Reinmar, Wernher does not enjoy a large measure of security at any time in his career. He earns his living by wandering from court to court and making frequent appeals to the generosity of his patrons.[79] Wernher is forthright and at times even blunt in requesting a reward for his services. In a "Spruch" directed to the Swabian nobility he recalls their widespread reputation for liberality, adding that he plans to see if they really deserve such acclaim:

nû wil ich in ir lande ervarn, wie si dâ sîn gemuot.
Swer mir dâ heime und anderewâ von schulden muoz gevallen wol,
der sî gewis, daz ich im tuon mit sange, als ich ze rehte sol,
ist deich in vinde alsô, daz er vor schanden ist behuot.
(14, 3ff.)[80]

Anton Schönbach notes that the word "schande" is synonymous here with "die Kargheit, die sich für vornehme Herren nicht schickt, wie Wernher das Wort auch sonst häufig gebraucht."[81] Schönbach accurately summarizes the message of the poem: "Der Spruch enthält die ziemlich unverblümte Aufforderung an die schwäbischen Fürsten . . . und Herren, dem Dichter reichlich zu spenden, je nach der Gabe werde auch das Lob ausfallen."[82] Wernher is even more direct in another "Spruch", which begins with the words "Nieman sol guot vor mir versparn!" (38, 1). His mention of the villages which he has come to know during his travels (38, 4) make it probable to assume that he was sometimes compelled to sing for the rich peasants because of insufficient reward from the nobility.[83]

In making his appeals for milte, Wernher does not hesitate to portray his impoverished state in vivid and pathetic terms. One of his "Sprüche", which was probably written after the death of a nobleman who had shown him favor, begins with the following desperate plea to a potential future patron:

Wer hilfet mir an sîner stat, des helfe mir was vil gereit?
ich lige sêre in jâmers bat, wer wil durch sîne werdekeit
mir helfen sô der noete mîn, daz mir noch vröude werde bekant? (55, 1ff.)

In a similar "Spruch" - one which Schönbach appropriately labels "ein wahrer Bettelspruch"[84] - Wernher depicts his personal circumstances in

an abject and inconsolable manner: Although he frequently receives the help of liberal men, he is just as frequently overlooked at places where he had expected to receive a proper reward. Evil men mock him. Worst of all, he meets many a man who is willing to be generous to him; but the "ôrendriusel", i.e., the flatterers and slanderers at court, turn that man against him so that he receives nothing in the end (71). Of all the "Spruchdichter" whom we have discussed thus far, none is as direct and demanding in his pleas for milte nor as drastic in the depiction of his sad plight as is Wernher.

Wernher is also enthusiastic in his praise of liberal patrons. No fewer than six of his seventy-six extant "Sprüche" are dedicated to noblemen whose most outstanding virtue is milte (31; 48; 56; 61; 64; 74). In these poems, as in his "Bittstrophen", a common theme recurs: Wernher assures his patrons that their generosity will bring them honor. His songs of praise overtly differ from his "Bittstrophen" in one respect: In the former, Wernher focuses exclusively on the virtue of the noblemen, asking nothing for himself; but it is clear that they, too, are covertly inspired at least in part by the poet's hope of receiving a reward. In calling attention to the absence of such "Lobsprüche" in Reinmar's poetry, Roethe states that Wernher is one of many poets "deren ganzes Ach und Weh aus diesem einen Punkte [aus der milte] zu kurieren war."[85] He goes on to describe Wernher as

> . . . den ewig Unzufriedenen, der mit verblüffend naivem und consequentem Egoismus die milte zur alleinseligmachenden Tugend stempelt und für diese Spielmannsmoral gar noch einen Gotteslohn

> erwartet: wenn man ihn so gerne ob seines 'sittlichen Ernstes' mit Reinmar vergleicht, so nimmt man ihn viel zu ernst, man tut ihm Unrecht, wenn man ihn zum pessimistischen Moralisten macht.[86]

While it is true that milte is of great importance to Wernher because it signifies the alleviation of his poverty, Roethe hardly does the poet justice by attributing his "Lobsprüche" to selfishness and labelling them as an expression of a "Spielmannsmoral" which is wholly lacking in idealism. Roethe fails to realize that Wernher's definition of milte goes beyond the conventional pleas for reward and the traditional praises of liberal men. In Wernher's view - a view which is undoubtedly influenced by his religious calling - a nobleman is obliged to practice Christian charity. It is as much an appeal to caritas as the desire for personal gain which inspires Wernher to sing his songs of praise.

Udo Gerdes is somewhat more accurate than Roethe in his discussion of Wernher's treatment of milte: "Wernher stellt die Aufforderung zur Freigebigkeit neben die Ermahnung zur Gottesliebe und spezialisiert damit das 'praeceptum charitatis' auf die 'milte': 'teilet iuwer guot den armen mite und minnet got'."[87] But Gerdes also maintains that Wernher treats virtue - and especially the virtue of milte - primarily within the context of religion;[88] and he further implies that there is nothing specifically courtly about Wernher's definition of milte:

> Über den richtigen Gebrauch des Gutes, und das heißt über die Freigebigkeit, sagt Wernher: hätte er den Besitz manches Herren, er würde 'varndez guot durch got umb êre baz verzern' (17,4), um den Lohn Gottes und den Ruhm in der Welt also. Diese doppelte Beziehung stellt nichts spezifisch Höfisches vor; sie ist auch aus dem Munde des Predigers Berthold von Regensburg zu

hören: 'sô varn wir mit unserm leben durch die werlt unde haben daz leben erkant aller êrste, wie wir gein gote und gein der werlte leben suln.'[89]

In addition to overlooking the fact that Berthold's definition of milte is influenced by the courtly definition of this virtue,[90] Gerdes also fails to realize that Wernher's words "durch got umb ere" are completely synonymous with a fundamental and recurrent theme of courtly literature: "got und der werlt gevallen". To earn the praise of the world and God's favor as well are not mutually exclusive but complementary ideals. Together they constitute the ultimate goal of the courtly individual.[91] A careful reading of Wernher's "Sprüche" reveals that his definition of milte is both courtly and religious.

In the first place, in all but one of the "Sprüche" in which Wernher treats milte in its relationship to Christian charity, he also stresses its relationship to honor (12; 17; 57; 59; 69; the exception is 70). Wernher's reasoning is best exemplified by the words which he addresses to a nobleman who seems reluctant to be generous: "Got gît dem êre gernden guot./ vil tugende vuore, dâ bî wâre minne." (57, 7f.) Worldly goods are given to man by God so that man might use them for the benefit of others. As Gerdes observes, "'wâre minne' ist 'caritas'. Sie bedeutet nach dem Kontext die Nächstenliebe als das geistliche Synonymum der Freigebigkeit."[92] But Gerdes fails to note Wernher's implication that by using wealth properly, man receives the honor which he seeks. Wernher, like Walther and Thomasin, is expressing a thought which is typical of the courtly era: Honor is accorded the man who acts in a virtuous manner.

Secondly, Wernher also treats milte in its relationship to honor without any reference to Christian charity. Very much in tune with the sentiments of his times, he declares "daz nieman edel sî/ niwan der edellîchen tuot" (22, lf.), and he adds that greed destroys one's nobility. The greedy individual, he says, "solte sehen die armen hôchgemuoten an,/ wie die mit hövescheit kunnen wol nach ganzer wirde ringen." (22, 9f.) The same idea is expressed in "Spruch" 47:

> Der hêrren guot und hêrren namen
> ze rehte nieman solte hân,
> niwan der mit den beiden ordenlîche kunde leben.
> Daz ist unhêrrelîche getân,
> swer sich niht wil untriuwen schamen
> und ouch der grôzen kerge, da man solte umb êre geben.
> (47, lff.)

Clearly Wernher's definition of milte does not differ substantially from that of other authors of the courtly period.

Wernher also treats erge in much the same way that other courtly authors do: as a cardinal sin which inevitably leads to the gates of hell, and as a certain cause of the destruction of one's worldly honor (36). The difference between Wernher and the other didactic poets whom we have discussed thus far lies not so much in his definition of milte and of erge as in his overwhelming and pessimistic conviction that erge has become the most prevalent vice of the nobility: "Er sieht in vielem negativer als Reinmar; Geiz und Gewinnsucht erscheinen in seinen Sprüchen als die vorherrschenden Wesenszüge der Mächtigen und Reichen."[93] Unequivocal denunciation of greedy men - sometimes of a particular man and sometimes of greedy individuals in general - is the central focus of eleven of Wernher's "Sprüche" (11;

12; 17; 26; 36; 39; 47; 59; 67; 72; 73). Even when Wernher touches upon milte in some of these poems, it is clearly greed which most concerns him. Typical of these poems is 72, in which Wernher describes the fate of the greedy man who has died. His wife and children hate him and are unmoved by his demise: "si gunnen im des tôdes wol". His relatives remember him as "ein verschamter gouch" and as a "triuwenlaerez vaz". Widows and orphans speak of his funeral Mass as "des tiuvels spil". Reinmar himself calls this man "der zage", and he concludes the "Spruch" with the words, "ô wê dir, erge, daz dû bist! der boeste val von dir geschiht." The vehemence of his condemnation of erge and the frequency with which he returns to this theme makes him, along with Reinmar, a forerunner of later authors such as Berthold von Regensburg, who speak of the courtly virtue of milte as an irretrievable phenomenon of the past.

D. Summary and Conclusions

In the genre of "Sangspruch" we find the full range of the traditional meaning and usage of milte. It is logical that itinerant poets whose livelihood depends upon the generosity of their patrons should frequently define milte as "Lohn" in the "Dienst-Lohn" relationship and that they should also sing the praises of liberal men. The more desperate their personal circumstances, the more urgent and direct are their pleas for generosity, as in the case of Herger and Bruder Wernher. Only Reinmar, who knows some measure of security, need not resort to writing "Bittstrophen" and "Lobsprüche". Milte

as "Lohn" serves not only to sustain the indigent poet but also to increase the honor of his patron in men's eyes. For Walther it serves an additional purpose. It distinguishes him from the "Spielleute" and constitutes an acknowledgement of his noble status.

Only Herger and Spervogel, who write before the advent of the courtly period, define milte solely within the framework of tradition. For Walther, Reinmar and Wernher, milte is not only the concrete act of giving but a manifestation of the inner attitude of "rîcher muot". In accordance with the spirit of the times in which they write, they also insist that the man who does not possess this inner attitude is unworthy of honor and recognition.

But even more striking than the courtly definition of milte which these writers share with other authors of the courtly period is their keen awareness of the increasing prevalence of greed in society. While Herger and Spervogel define greed as the failure to bestow an appropriate reward upon the deserving poet, Walther, Reinmar and Wernher define erge as a wrong attitude towards material possessions. And while Herger limits his complaints about avarice to a terse observation - "die hêrren sint erarget" - , the poets of the next two generations repeatedly decry the absence of milte from contemporary society. They look back to an elusive golden age in which inner honor and God's favor were valued more highly than money, and they contrast that era to their own times, when men seem willing to commit any crime and sacrifice all spiritual values for the sake of acquiring wealth. In short, they sense the imminent decline and disappearance of the courtly virtue of milte, which , as we shall see, soon becomes a reality.

CHAPTER VI

MILTE AFTER THE DECLINE OF THE COURTLY PERIOD

In the preceding chapter we called attention to the harsh and emphatic condemnations of erge in the writings of Thomasin and Freidank. We also noted that the "Sangspruchdichter" of the courtly period lamented the absence of the virtue of milte from contemporary society and that they repeatedly denounced the prevalence of erge in their times. These didactic authors were among the last writers of the Middle Ages who defined milte as the attitude of "rîcher muot" and who stressed the relationship of this attitude to inner honor and integrity. In this chapter we will attempt to determine the reasons why the courtly concept of milte eventually vanishes from the German language. We will also briefly deal with major works of literature from the latter part of the thirteenth century which best illustrate the reasons for the decline and disappearance of this courtly concept.

That milte eventually ceases to be defined as "rîcher muot" is due at least in part to important social and economic changes which take place in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Prior to that time, the Western European economy, "based as it was on a rigid land tenure system and upon production for immediate consumption", had reached the point of almost total stagnation.[1] But from the end of the eleventh century there are signs of economic growth, and in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries a genuine economic expansion occurs. Trade becomes so great that there is not enough room in the old feudal towns for merchants. Already-existing settlements expand and

become significant towns which accommodate the increasing number of merchants and handcraftsmen, who grow ever more influential and wealthy as time passes. As DeBoor says of these city-dwellers, "Sie erkämpfen ihre Privilegien, kodifizieren ihre Stadtrechte und beginnen, sich zu Bündnissen zusammenzuschließen, um ihre Rechte zu wahren und ihren Handel zu fördern."[2]

Along with the ascent of medieval cities and their inhabitants to power and wealth, a gradual transition from natural economy to money economy, i.e., from payments rendered in service and in kind to money payments, takes place.[3] Coinage systems, which were limited in the past, are improved. Instruments of credit are established, and the bill of exchange comes into being. In all major sectors of economic endeavor - in agriculture, commerce, industry, and the employment of labor - the one common characteristic is "an increase in the use of money as a medium of exchange."[4]

At the same time that these social and economic changes take place, literary activity gradually begins to shift away from the courts to the cities:

> Die gebildete städtische Oberschicht, in der sich die großen Handelsherren mit der Stadtritterschaft und den geistlichen Prälaten traf, tritt in ihrer Weise das Erbe der Höfe der Stauferzeit an. Sie nimmt Literatur mäzenatenhaft in Pflege und entfaltet literarische Interessen.[5]

DeBoor is careful to point out that these townspeople are not essentially interested in a new "bürgerliche Dichtung": "Soweit sie nicht religiöse Bedürfnisse literarisch erfüllten, wollten sie sich als eigentliche Erben der höfischen Gesittung und damit auch der höfischen Dichtung

fühlen."[6] But this new audience, concerned as it is with trade, commerce and the acquisition of money, eventually shows its predilection for a different type of literature. Moreover, the nature and quality of literature is also affected by the increasing number of writers who do not belong to the nobility. The major epics written after 1250 are imitations of the courtly epics which preceded them; but while they adhere to courtly form and style, they often lack an understanding of the spirit and idealism of their antecedents. The same is true of the lyric poetry of the times: "Höfische Epik wird zum bloß interessanten Stoff, höfische Lyrik zur Konvention, und beides wurde auch von nichtadligen Dichtern geübt, die höfisches Wesen nicht mehr von innen heraus nacherlebten."[7] As courtly forms are retained but the underlying spirit disappears, we see in all literary genres a growing interest in that which is concrete, tangible and readily apprehensible.

It is clear that the concept of milte as "rîcher muot" - a specifically courtly concept - cannot long survive in an age when the cities are becoming more important than the courts and when authors are increasingly directing their works to a non-courtly audience whose members are interested not so much in abstractions like minne and milte as they are in concrete, practical considerations like earning money. Just as the abstract concept of minne does not outlive the courtly society which created and fostered it, so also does the courtly concept of milte die out of the language because it is so intricately connected with the philosophy and values of an era which is rapidly declining and drawing to a close.

That the times are changing - and that the concept of milte is also destined to change - is seen most clearly when we compare the writings of Rudolf von Ems and Konrad von Würzburg. Rudolf writes between the years 1230 and 1250. Although he prefers religious and historical themes to fantastic tales of aventiure in the Arthurian mode, he writes for a courtly audience in the courtly tradition:[8]

> Er ist in seinem Denken ganz und gar ständisch bestimmt. Er lebt aus der Idealität des Rittertums als Vorrecht und Verpflichtung. Äußerer Adel durch innere Gesinnung erhoben, das ist echte Nachfolge Hartmanns von Aue.[9]

Rudolf's definition of milte in no way differs from that of other authors of the courtly period, as we see in his Alexander. There milte is the inner attitude of "rîcher muot", and material goods are the means by which one outwardly demonstrates that attitude. Thus Alexander's father bestows riches upon his son with the words:

> "nim sô vil der habe mîn
> daz dû nâch dînem muote
> mit lîbe und ouch mit guote
> mügest miltecliche varn
> und dîne miltekeit bewarn." (2264ff.)[10]

Similarly, the man who is milte attains the goals sought by every courtly individual:

> sô bejagt des herren miltekeit
> saelde heil êre und guot,
> der welte gunstlîchen muot. (1702ff.)

Rudolf also treats the vice of greed as do other courtly authors; for him it is the source of shame and dishonor: "der schanden wurz diu gîtekeit/ der tugent al ir êre entreit . . . . " (1555f.)

Even in his works which are of a religious nature, Rudolf defines milte as an essentially courtly virtue. The title hero of Der guote Gêrhart receives the epithet "guot" precisely because he epitomizes the virtue of milte:

> sîn miltez herze reizet
> daz man in guoten heizet:
> durch daz ist er guot genant. (601ff.)[11]

Gerhart's generosity is contrasted to that of the Emperor Otto, who founds a bishopric primarily for the sake of winning worldly honor. When Otto asks God to show him his reward for such generosity, an angel informs him that he has already received it in the form of the acknowledgement and recognition accorded him by his fellow man. The angel reminds him that he was generous "durch ruom", for the sake of "der welte lobelîchen prîs" (538f.), adding that God seeks "reines herzen muot" (544), i.e., milte which is not exercised for the sake of personal gain but which is instead a manifestation of unselfish generosity and nobility of spirit. It is this type of milte that the merchant Gerhart manifests when he willingly sacrifices all his money and possessions in order to ransom captive Christian knights and ladies in the Orient, and when he then refuses to be repaid by them.

It might be argued that Gerhart's generosity to the captives is primarily an act of Christian charity rather than a demonstration of the courtly virtue of milte, particularly because it is prompted by a religious motive. When an angel appears to Gerhart in a dream, urging him to rescue the Christians, Gerhart decides to do so for

the most noble reason which the angel mentions:

'tuost duz durch gelt, sî geltent dir;
tuost aber duz durch êre,
man lobt dich immer mêre;
tuost duz durch gotes gebot,
sô wizzet reht daz dir got
gît umb sî ze lône
die immer wernden krône.' (1860ff.)

But the words with which Gerhart announces his intention to aid them are clearly synonymous with "rîcher muot":

'sô hân ich des vil guoten muot
daz ich iuch hinnen loesen wil
und machen iuwer swaere ein zil.' (2076ff.)

Moreover, because he demonstrates the attitude of "rîcher muot", he wins not only the favor of God but also the highest recognition which could possibly be accorded him. When he goes to England, the land of his benefactors, the people are determined to make him their king. Rudolf's message is clear: Generosity must be based upon the noblest and most selfless of motives. When that is indeed the case, the generous individual attains the goal of every courtly individual. He wins worldly honor and eternal salvation as well. The fact that the most admirable figure in the work is not the emperor but a merchant serves to underscore the courtly belief that nobility is based upon noble actions rather than royal lineage.

A somewhat different treatment of milte is found in the works of Konrad von Würzburg, who is a generation older than Rudolf and who writes not for the court but for the upper class of the city population.[12] To be sure, Konrad defines milte in much the same way that Rudolf does. But in contrast to his predecessor, Konrad regards milte

as a phenomenon which is rapidly vanishing from contemporary society. He stresses the fact that men no longer acknowledge the attitude of "rîcher muot" unless the individual who possesses that attitude can demonstrate it by means of money. In his Engelhard, for example, Konrad describes the title hero as a model of courtly virtue who unfortunately receives neither honor nor recognition because he lacks material wealth:

> er was gar aller saelde vol,
> wan daz im brast an guote,
> daz edeles herzen muote
> bieten muoz geleite
> ze hôher werdekeite. (264ff.)[13]

Konrad goes on to make the following observation about the times in which he lives:

> Wan zwâre, als ich erkennen kan,
> sô mac vil kûme ein edel man
> wert gesîn in kranker habe.
> an hôher wirde gât im abe,
> swenn er geldes niht enhât.
> als ez nû in der werlde stât,
> sô darf ein man wol guotes
> der edeles herzen muotes
> wil pflegen unde spulgen.
> daz silber in den bulgen
> dringet für die hôhen tugent. (269ff.)

Like the "Sangspruchdichter" whose works we discussed in the preceding chapter, Konrad speaks as laudator temporis acti, lamenting the tendency of contemporary man to judge only by external and tangible criteria. Young Engelhard is compelled to travel to the court of the liberal King Fruote of Denmark to seek his fortune. His words prior to departure are a reflection of the poet's awareness that money has become the only path to fame and honor:

'ich waene, an mir verderben muoz
ritters name und ouch sîn amt.
ich fürhte, ich müeze ir beider samt
ledic unde blôz gestân,
swenn ich des geldes niht mac hân
dâ mite ich mir gewinnen müge
lop daz mînen êren tüge
die von geburt mich erbent an.' (290ff.)

But the contrast between past and present in regard to milte is most evident when Konrad deals with the plight of the artist in his times. The opening lines of his Trojanischer Krieg constitute one of many reminders to his audience that poets of genuine stature are currently few in number and that shabby treatment has become their lot:

Waz sol nû sprechen unde sanc?
man seit ir beider cleinen danc,
und ist ir zwâre doch unvil,
die mit getihte fröuden spil
den liuten bringen unde geben.
man siht der meister wênic leben,
die singen oder sprechen wol . . . . (1ff.)[14]

Although these men should enjoy "der wirde und des gewinnes" (136), quite the opposite is the case. They are habitually neglected, while the "künstelôsen tôren" receive unlimited wealth and honor (136ff.). In this work Konrad politely assures his audience that he will continue to sing and speak, "swie cleine ich drumbe lônes habe" (178); but in "Spruch" 32, 181 he angrily assails the "edelen tumben" who allow inferior poets to cheat them of their wealth when they should instead extend milte to the "künsterîchen". He denounces these inferior poets as plagiarists who steal "ir rede und ir gedoene" from genuine artists, and he expresses even greater contempt for those who are generous to such charlatans: "in der tiuvel hoene/ der ûf si kêre sîne gunst!"[15] Their generosity is not milte but a perversion of this virtue.

Whenever Konrad writes about art, he makes a two-fold demand of his audience: They must discriminate between the good and the bad artist, and they must reward the good one according to his merits. That these demands are not being met by contemporary society is quite apparent in Die Klage der Kunst. In this work "Frou Wildekeit" - a fitting allegory of the times - leads the poet to a beautiful meadow where Justice, the queen, is seated amid her retinue of twelve courtly virtues. In their splendid attire they form a dramatic contrast to Art, who appears before the queen in a tattered dress to explain her plight and plead her case. She is a victim of "diu valsche Milte", who enriches "die künstelôsen alle" while allowing true artists at court to perish. Art brings the following accusation against her adversary:

> Swer kunst in sînem herzen hât,
> den kan si wol versmâhen,
> swer aber âne fuoge stât,
> dem wil si balde nâhen. (17, 1ff.)[16]

Justice recognizes the gravity of the situation and renders a verdict which reflects the poet's attitude towards the problem: "Wer rechte Kunst nicht liebt und doch als milte gelten will, dem soll die Gunst der höfischen Tugenden versagt sein, und er wird zu einem freudlosen Leben verdammt."[17]

Konrad's works show us that the virtue of milte is vanishing from courtly society because men attribute ever greater importance to material wealth and because they extend their valsche milte to inferior, uncourtly poets who are rapidly increasing in number. In the Helmbrecht of Wernher der Gartenaere we see another reason for its disappearance:

the decay of courtly society and courtly values. As DeBoor observes, Wernher's work is a picture of the times in which it originates:

> Der einzelne Fall, von dem das Gedicht erzählt, ist typisch für die Zeit, in der der Dichter lebt; es wird zur aktuellen Zeitsatire und Zeitkritik, und in diesem Sinne kann Werner mit Recht sagen, daß er erzählt, was ihm geschehen ist und was er mit seinen Augen gesehen hat (V. 7f.).[18]

What Wernher has seen is eloquently portrayed in the conversation between father and son which takes place when the latter returns home after a year of "Raubrittertum". The elder Helmbrecht recalls a bygone era of genuine courtliness which contrasts radically to the present state of affairs depicted by his son. Just as the true spirit of courtliness has been replaced by its very antithesis - "'swer liegen kan der ist gemeit,/ triegen daz ist höveschеit'" (1007f.)[19] - , so also has milte been distorted and debased. The gifts which Helmbrecht distributes to his family in imitation of courtly custom are nothing other than stolen goods. The biting sarcasm with which Wernher concludes his description of Helmbrecht's "generosity" serves to underscore the absolute perversion of courtliness and milte which the young villain's actions represent:

> sô hövesch was Helmbrecht;
> waer er noch sînes vater kneht,
> er hêt in lâzen âne schuoch . . . . (1085ff.)

While Konrad and Wernher show us that the virtue of milte is vanishing from courtly society, Berthold von Regensburg is untiring in his assertions that milte is absent from the lives of the city dwellers to whom he preaches. Berthold occasionally defines milte

in a way which recalls the courtly definition of this concept, as when he admonishes his audience, "Unde die dâ niht hânt ze gebenne mit der hant, die geben mit dem herzen, mit dem guoten willen."[20] But for him, milte is primarily an expression of the Christian virtues of caritas and misericordia rather than a courtly virtue. Thus he completes his admonition with the words, "Wan ez sprichet der guote samt Johannes: 'gib den hungerigen z' ezzen.'"[21] Similarly, he recommends that his listeners imitate the miltekeit of the saints, which he defines as the giving of alms to the poor in order that their suffering might be alleviated: "Manic tûsent heiligen sint mit ir miltekeit ze himelrîche komen, unde dar umbe sô sult ir helflich sîn armen liuten."[22]

Berthold reminds his audience that milte is a rare phenomenon in his times ("Ich waene diu tugende [milte] hie ze lande tiwer ist unde fremede . . . .[23]), and he frequently preaches about the Christian responsibility to be generous to the needy. But it is gitekeit rather than milte which stands in the foreground of countless of his sermons. Berthold uses this word to denote the acquisition of goods by any illicit means, as we see from the words which he directs to the "arbeitenden liuten":

> Unde swie maniger leie gîtikeit sî, die sol man alle hie rüegen: wuocherer, fürköufer, dingesgeber, untriuwe an koufe, untriuwe an hantwerke, rouben unde steln: daz heizet allez samt gîtikeit. Swie man unreht guot gewinnet, daz ist allez gîtikeit.[24]

Berthold's definition is clearly influenced by the type of audience that he preaches to. Most of the manifestations of greed which he denounces are precisely the transgressions to which the rising class

of city dwellers - comprised as it is in large part of merchants and handcraftsmen - is most prone.

According to Berthold, there is scarcely a sin which is more detestable and more worthy of condemnation than greed. In fact, he is harsher, more emphatic and more unrelenting in his denunciations of greedy individuals than any other writer whose works we have considered. The words "Pfî gîtiger!" constitute his most common form of address to these individuals; moreover, they generally introduce a passage in which the preacher expresses his - and God's - utter contempt for those who are guilty of this sin. Typical of many such passages is the following:

> Pfî, gîtiger, wie legest dû dîne zît an! wie wirdest du stên an der reitunge! wie gar dir verschaffen ist vor allen den sünden die diu werlt ie gewan oder iemer gewinnet! Wan dîn zît gêt dir niht alleine unnützelîchen hin, sie gêt dir halt unnützelîchen unde schentlîchen unde süntlîchen hin. Alle die andern sünden lânt got etelîche zît geruowen wan dû unde dîn zît: wan diu gêt aller tegelîchen hin mit sünden âne underlâz. Unde dâ von sprichet got selber, - dû wuocherer unde fürköufer unde satzunger unde dingesgeber inz jâr, wan dû got sîn zît verkoufest, sô sprichet got selber zuo dir ein wort, daz ich drîzic pfunt niht ennaeme, daz ich alsô vor disen liuten spraeche unde vor disen engeln als got selber zuo dir sprichet, wan ez würden alle die liute und alle dise engel dâ von betrüebet ob ich iezuo spraeche als got selber sprichet zuo dir - : er sprichet alsô durch den wissagen: 'dû rehte boese hût!' unde sprichet alsô für sich hin: 'dû rehte boese hût, dû laest mich niemer geruowen. Die von Sodomâ und Gomorâ unde von Samariâ, die lânt mich etewenne geruowen, aber dû laezest mich niemer geruowen.[25]

Berthold's total abhorrence of greed can also be seen from the position which he ascribes to it in the hierarchy of vices. When he preaches about a number of vices to be eschewed, he often adheres to

rhetorical principles by treating gitekeit, the most serious one, last. In his sermon Von den Engeln, for example, greed appears as the final and most reprehensible of seven vices:

> Der sibenden untugende der ir widersteˆn sult,
> daˆ beschirme uns der almehtige gotˆ vor, wan diz
> ist der aller wirsten und schedelicheˆsten süˆnden
> und untugenden einiu, die diu werlt ie gewan oder
> iemer meˆr gewinnen mac.[26]

Gitekeit is depicted in the same way in his sermon Von Sehs Mordaeren, where it is the sixth and worst murderer of the soul, and in other sermons as well.[27]

The works from the latter part of the thirteenth century which we have discussed in this chapter serve as clear indications of the reasons why the concept of milte as "riˆcher muot" eventually disappears from the German language. Although the courtly concept of milte does not end with the thirteenth century - we see it in the fourteenth century, for example, in the "Spruchdichtung" of Heinrich der Teichner[28] - it does not outlive the Middle Ages. To be sure, various forms of the word itself persist in the language to the present time. But neither the New High German substantive "Milde" nor the adjective "mildtätig" conveys the richness and complexity of the courtly concept of milte. These words are remnants of a distinctly courtly, medieval concept which is so intricately related to the thought of the times in which it becomes a central concept that it does not survive beyond them.

FOOTNOTES

Chapter I

[1]The medieval concept of *êre* serves as a fitting example. *Êre* denotes both the outer recognition and honor accorded the individual by his fellow man and the inner honor, worth and integrity of the individual. The New High German substantive *Ehre* retains both meanings. See *Der Grosse Duden: Bedeutungswörterbuch*, 1970 ed. (Mannheim: Dudenverlag, 1970), p. 185. There *Ehre* is defined as "*äußeres Ansehen, Geachtetsein durch andere [und dessen Ausdruck in einer besonderen Auszeichnung], Anerkennung*" and as "*innerer Wert, persönliche Würde*". All further references to the New High German equivalents of medieval lexical items will be taken from this edition of the *Duden*.

[2]Although the concept of liberality or magnanimity plays a role in other medieval languages and literatures - most notably in the French and Castilian - , we will limit the scope of this study to medieval German literature.

[3]See Gustav Ehrismann, "Die Grundlagen des Ritterlichen Tugendsystems," *Ritterliches Tugendsystem*, ed. Günter Eifler, Wege der Forschung, Vol. 56 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1970). Although Ehrismann's pronouncements on the "Knightly System of Virtue" have been subject to attack, they have stimulated a large volume of significant scholarly research.

[4]Ibid., pp. 14 and 25.

[5]Helmut DeBoor and Richard Newald, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart*, 7th ed. (München: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1966), II, 421. All further references to this work will be abbreviated as DeBoor.

[6]Günter Eifler, *Die Ethischen Anschauungen in 'Freidanks Bescheidenheit'*, Hermea: Germanistische Forschungen, Neue Folge, Vol. 25 (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1969). At this point we refer to Eifler's work because it serves as the best example of the treatment of *milte* in secondary literature which is available to date. In a later chapter we will deal with Eifler's arguments in detail.

[7]*Friedrich Ludwig Stamms Ulfilas oder die uns erhaltenen Denkmäler der gotischen Sprache*, ed. Moritz Heyne, Bibliothek der ältesten deutschen Litteratur-Denkmäler, Vol. I (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh Verlag, 1874), p. 130. All quotations from Ulfilas will be taken from this edition of the text.

[8]Heliand und Genesis, ed. Otto Behaghel, Altdeutsche Textbibliothek, No. 4 (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1958). All quotations from the Heliand will be taken from this edition of the text.

[9]Wilhelm Braune and Ernst Ebbinghaus, Althochdeutsches Lesebuch, 14th ed. (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1965), p. 86.

[10]Gustav Ehrismann, Geschichte der deutschen Literatur bis zum Ausgang des Mittelalters (1966; rpt. München: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1932), I, 142.

[11]Ibid., p. 143.

[12]Otfrid von Weissenburg, Evangelienbuch, ed. Johann Kelle (Aalen: Otto Zeller Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1963; rpt. of the 1856 ed.), I. All quotations from the Evangelienbuch will be taken from this edition of the text.

[13]Tatian, ed. Eduard Sievers, 2nd. ed., Bibliothek der ältesten deutschen Literatur-Denkmäler, Vol. 5 (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh Verlag, 1960). All quotations from the Tatian will be taken from this edition of the text.

[14]In the Heliand the corresponding passage reads: "Sâlige sind ôc them hîr mildi uuirđit/ hugi an helido briostun . . . . " (1312f.)

[15]Beowulf, ed. C. L. Wrenn (London: George G. Harrap and Co., 1973), 1170f. All quotations from Beowulf will be taken from this edition of the text.

[16]Der Wälsche Gast des Thomasin von Zirclaria, ed. Heinrich Rückert, Deutsche Neudrucke; Reihe: Texte des Mittelalters (Berlin: Walter DeGruyter and Co., 1965; rpt. of the 1852 Leipzig ed.). All quotations from the Welscher Gast will be taken from this edition of the text.

[17]Die Lieder Walthers von der Vogelweide, ed. Friedrich Maurer, Altdeutsche Textbibliothek, No. 43 (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1960), I, 71.

[18]Die Gedichte Reinmars von Zweter, ed. Gustav Roethe (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1967; rpt. of the 1887 Leipzig ed.). All quotations from Reinmar's poetry will be taken from this edition of the text.

[19]Anton E. Schönbach, "Die Sprüche des Bruder Wernher," Beiträge zur Erklärung altdeutscher Dichtwerke, Drittes und Viertes Stück, Sitzungsberichte d. kaiserl. Akad. d. Wiss. in Wien, phil.-hist. Kl., Vol. 148, No. 7 (Vienna: K.U.K. Hof- und Universitäts-Buchhandlung, 1904).

Chapter II

[1]Kurt Ruh, Höfische Epik des deutschen Mittelalters. Erster Teil: Von den Anfängen bis zu Hartmann von Aue (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 1967), p. 39.

[2]"Der Vorauer Alexander," Lamprechts Alexander nach den drei Texten, ed. Karl Kinzel, Germanistische Handbibliothek, Vol. 6 (Halle: Buchhandlung des Waisenhauses, 1884), line 51. All references to (V) will be taken from this edition of the text.

[3]Ruh, pp. 39-40. In these pages Ruh also briefly discusses the interpretation of the Alexanderlied given by DeBoor and Werner Schröder, with whom he disagrees substantially.

[4]DeBoor, I, 237.

[5]Werner Schröder, "Zum Vanitas-Gedanken im Deutschen Alexanderlied," Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum, 91 (1961-62), 41.

[6]Ibid., pp. 41-43.

[7]DeBoor, I, 236.

[8]"Der Strassburger Alexander," Lamprechts Alexander nach den drei Texten, ed. Karl Kinzel. All references to (S) will be taken from this edition of the text.

[9]Herwig Buntz, Die deutsche Alexanderdichtung des Mittelalters, Sammlung Metzler, 123 (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1973), p. 18.

[10]In discussing (S), DeBoor makes the following observation: "Die Bezeichnung der 'wunderliche Alexander' ist in Lamprechts Munde so wenig ein uneingeschränktes Lob wie 'stolz' und 'übermütig', und es wäre undenkbar, daß ihm das mittelhochdeutsche Lobeswort 'der guote Alexander' zuteil würde, wie es den guten Herrschern der Kaiserchronik zufällt." DeBoor, I, 238. However, Alexander is indeed described as "der gute" in (S), and it is precisely his capacity for milte which earns him that epithet.

[11]Das Alexanderlied des Pfaffen Lamprecht; Das Rolandslied des Pfaffen Konrad, ed. Friedrich Maurer, Deutsche Literatur; Reihe Geistliche Dichtung des Mittelalters, Vol. 5 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1964), pp. 11-12. All references to the Rolandslied will be taken from this edition of the text.

[12]Horst Richter, Kommentar zum Rolandslied des Pfaffen Konrad - Teil I, Kanadische Studien zur deutschen Sprache und Literatur, No. 6 (Bern: Verlag Herbert Lang, 1972), p. 160.

[13]Ibid.

[14]Ibid., pp. 160-161.

[15]Ibid., p. 161.

[16]Ibid.

[17]Ibid., p. 160.

[18]DeBoor notes that despite being guilty of the sin of superbia, Genelun has a number of positive traits. In the counsel scene in which Marsilie's offer of peace is discussed, Genelun states his point of view "mannhaft und mit erwogenen Gründen". He is depicted as a loving and devoted husband and father. The fact that the members of his "Sippe" support him even to the extent of risking their lives to vindicate his honor when he is brought to trial (they cannot believe that he was capable of treason) also indicates that he has at least some redeeming qualities. DeBoor, I, 245.

[19]See also 6283ff. In this passage the author reminds us of Genelun's greed by having Roland exclaim the following words as he faces a heathen adversary: "'Âne wâge gilte ich dir widere/ daz golt, daz du gaebe/ Genelune dem verrâtære.'" At Genelun's trial his avarice is again mentioned: "'Genelun hât si durh miete hin gegeben.'" (8828)

[20]The fact that Karl sends Genelun as his ambassador to the heathens is indicative of the total trust which he has in him. Before Genelun departs for Spain, Karl generously bestows gifts upon him "ze liebe" (1624) as a sign of love and affection. Genelun is married to Karl's sister; his son Baldwin is Karl's "Schwestersohn". The strong ties between Karl and Genelun make the latter's betrayal a crime of enormous proportions.

[21]Ehrismann, II, 2, 1, p. 79.

[22]Ibid.

[23]Gabriele Schieb, Henric van Veldeken, Sammlung Metzler, 42 (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1965), p. 61.

[24]Ibid., pp. 2-3.

[25]Ibid., p. 45.

[26]Ibid.

[27]For a discussion of the similarities and differences between the Roman d' Eneas and Veldeke's epic, see Schieb, pp. 45ff.

[28]Henric van Veldeken, Eneide, ed. Gabriele Schieb and Theodor Frings, Deutsche Texte des Mittelalters, Vol. 58 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1964), I. All references to the Eneide will be taken from this edition of the text.

[29]Walter Johannes Schröder, Spielmannsepik, 2nd ed., Sammlung Metzler, 19 (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1967), p. 1.

[30]Ibid., p. 10. Schröder notes: "Nehmen wir an, daß alle Denkmäler noch ins 12. Jh gehören, so ist ihre chronologische Reihenfolge ganz ungewiß. Das ihnen gemeinsame Formelgut erschwert jede Bestimmung literarischer Priorität oder Abhängigkeit." Michael Curschmann, too, acknowledges that the uncertain dating of these works is one of the major problems in dealing with them. Michael Curschmann, Der Münchener Oswald und die deutsche spielmännische Epik, Münchener Texte und Untersuchungen zur deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters, Vol. 6 (München: Verlag C. H. Beck, 1964), p. 1.

[31]W. J. Schröder, p. 10.

[32]Ibid.

[33]W. J. Schröder notes that disagreement exists about the inclusion of all these works under the heading of "Spielmannsepik". Ehrismann, for example, excludes Herzog Ernst from this category; he classifies it as an early courtly epic. (The reasons for this classification will be discussed later.) Schwietering, on the other hand, labels König Rother and Herzog Ernst as "weltliche Erzählungen" and the other three works as "volkstümliche Legenden". Ibid., p. 1. For a discussion of the problems involved in the name, essence and scope of the genre, see Schröder, pp. 2-8.

[34]Orendel: Ein deutsches Spielmannsgedicht mit Einleitung und Anmerkungen, ed. Arnold E. Berger (Bonn 1888), lines 890ff. All references to the text will be taken from this edition.

[35]iuch bittet ein vil ellender man -
durch got ir solt ez im nit versagen -
iuers rosses und iuers schiltes
durch des heilgen grabes milte
nit mer dan drî kêre,
so enger ich sin nit mêre . . . . (918ff.)

[36]Schröder, p. 70.

[37]Ibid.

[38]Ibid.

[39]Ibid.

[40]Ibid., p. 71.

[41]Ibid.

[42]Ehrismann, II, 1, 342-343.

[43]Ibid., p. 343.

[44]Curschmann, p. 123.

[45]Ibid., p. 124.

[46]Ibid., p. 125.

[47]Ehrismann notes that the style of the work as well as its language belong to a lower social level. Ehrismann, II, 1, 344. DeBoor, too, mentions characteristics of the work which are not indicative of courtly literature: "Diese Erzählgrundlage, der Legendenton mit einer mechanisierten Wundervorstellung . . . , die seelenlose Übersteigerung der Heldentaten, die Armut in der Erfindung der Namen, bei denen der Typus Merzian, Prinzian, Belian vorherrscht, die völlige Sorglosigkeit gegenüber der Form in Sprache, Rhythmus und Reim, all das wäre in der Massenliteratur der spätesten Mittelalters denkbar." DeBoor, I, 269. These characteristics cause DeBoor to doubt the validity of the assumption that Orendel was written in the twelfth century. Curschmann, who asserts that the work was probably written in the 1180's, correctly notes that it represents a step backward in regard to style and content. Curschmann, p. 125.

[48]Ehrismann, II, 1, 319.

[49]Schröder, p. 83.

[50]Ehrismann, II, 1, 319.

[51]Ibid.

[52]DeBoor calls attention to the courtly traits found in Salman und Morolf: "Salomos alte Herrlichkeit ist in höfische Form gekleidet, Salmes Schönheit in einer Ausführlichkeit der Schilderung dargestellt, wie sie uns bislang noch nicht begegnet ist." He further notes that the effect of woman's beauty on the knights is vividly depicted in the work. Salomo's relationship to his wife is a courtly one: He entrusts the captured enemy to her (even though it was the enemy's intention to steal her from her husband), twice spares her life and tearfully

mourns her death at the hand of Morolf. Salomo would rather endure death himself than bring harm to Fore's sister, which is also indicative of courtly behavior. Finally, there is something "höfisch Schonsames" in Salme's mild death by bloodletting when it is compared, for example, to Kriemhild's more violent death by sword. DeBoor, I, 265-266.

[53] Salman und Morolf, ed. Friedrich Vogt, Altdeutsche Texte für den Akademischen Unterricht, No. 1 (Halle: May Niemeyer Verlag, 1954), verse 376. All quotations from Salman und Morolf will be taken from this edition of the text.

[54] Ehrismann, II, 1, 320.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Ehrismann, II, 2, 1, 39.

[58] Schröder, p. 38.

[59] Ibid., p. 39.

[60] The fantastic quality of the second half of the work, in which Ernst undertakes a series of adventures on his way to Jerusalem that involve the "Schnabelmenschen", "Cyclopen", "Platthufe", "Langohren", etc., removes the epic from the purely precourtly or courtly realm.

[61] Ehrismann notes that Ernst is depicted as "das Idealbild eines Fürsten". He possesses many of the attributes which are typically attributed to the courtly knight: bravery above all; loyalty "in volkstümlich weltlichem Sinn: die innere Festigkeit der Überzeugung von dem, was Pflicht und Ehre gebieten und das unwandelbare Eintreten dafür"; strength and wisdom; piety and mercy in the service of his fellow man. Ehrismann, II, 2, 1, 47. Although Ehrismann neglects the question of Ernst's guilt (a question with which we will deal later), he is correct in stressing the fact that the hero is, for the most part, an exemplary individual.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Herzog Ernst in der mhd. Fassung B, ed. Bernhard Sowinski (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1970), lines 150ff. All quotations from Herzog Ernst will be taken from this edition of the text.

[64] See also 6014ff. When, at the end of the epic, the Emperor restores Ernst's land to him, Ernst behaves in a manner befitting a ruler of his stature. He takes excellent care of his people, and generosity plays a role in that care:

er begunde hêrlîche phlegen
sîner manne und sîner lande,
geliche einem wîgande,
daz er gap unde lêch.

[65]See also 4791ff. After Ernst takes over the land given to him by the King of Arimaspe, he immediately wins the favor of his new subjects by means of generosity:

Dô der herre daz lant gewan,
dô machete er im sîne man
beide willic unde holt.
er gab in silber unde golt
daz er niemen niht verzêch.
er gap hin unde lêch
daz ieclîcher gerne nam.
des muost der helt vil lobesam
sînen lantliuten allen
von schulden wol gevallen . . . .

[66]See also 87ff., where this aspect of milte is touched upon within a "Fürstenspiegel":

er was in diemuote
getriuwe unde milde.
des wurden im die schilde
vil wîten gesamenôt
so er ir bedorfte ze sîner nôt.

Ernst's speech to the men who will accompany him on the Crusade also reveals milte as a means of securing the loyalty of one's men:

"nimmer werdet von mir verlân
die wîle und ich den lîp hân:
der wirt durch iuch geveilet
und sî mit iu geteilet
beide grôz und kleine,
sol iu sîn gemeine,
swaz mir got gegeben hât." (1939ff.)

[67]Milte is an integral feature of hospitality, which is offered to Ernst by various royal hosts as he passes through their lands after his departure from Otto's realm: The King of Hungary gives gifts to Ernst (2026f.). Likewise, the King of Greece gives the traveler provisions for half a year as well as gold (2074ff.). The King of Arimaspe, witnessing Ernst's plight, has mercy on him and his men and supplies them with all their necessities (4544ff.; 4662ff.). In all these instances of hospitality milte is implicit. Milte as generosity is also an implicit characteristic of the King of Babylon (5656ff.) and of the King of Mohrenland (5638ff.). All these examples attest to the fact that the author of the work conceives of milte as an essential attribute of a ruler.

[68]Schröder, p. 49. Admittedly the question of Ernst's guilt is problematic, as Schröder points out. There are passages in the work which excuse him for his rebellion against the emperor (1906f.); other passages, however, depict him as an unjust rebel against emperor and realm (1389ff.). Nevertheless, Ernst embarks upon a Crusade with the express purpose of doing penance for his rebellion against the emperor, a rebellion which at the same time constitutes rebellion against God. In describing his actions against Otto, Ernst states:

"wir haben wider gote getân
daz wir im billîch müezen
ûf sîn hulde büezen,
daz er uns die schulde ruoche vergeben
her nâch, ob wirz geleben,
und wider heim ze lande komen.
swaz uns der keiser hât benomen,
daz wirt uns allez wider lân." (1818ff.)

Schröder calls attention to the significance of this passage: "Der . . . Hinweis auf die Notwendigkeit der Buße für widergöttliches Tun (v. 1818 ff.) könnte als zum Kreuzfahrtthema nun einmal gehöriges Gerede verstanden werden, wenn nicht am Ende der Effekt der Reise berührt würde: 'sollten wir zurückkehren, so werden wir alles, was der Kaiser uns genommen hat, zurückerhalten . . . .'" Ibid., pp. 47-48.

[69]We are dealing with the Münchener Oswald as opposed to the Wiener Oswald, which we will mention only in passing.

[70]Der Münchener Oswald, ed. Georg Baesecke, Germanistische Abhandlungen, No. 28 (Breslau: Marcus, 1907), 3f. All quotations from Oswald will be taken from this edition of the text.

[71]See lines 3, 27, 231, 302, 364, 393, 402, 468, 545, 552, 572, 682, 1317, 1515, 1692, 1901, 1905, 1932, 2242, 2308, 2601, 2613, 2953, 2964, 3031, 3099, 3137, 3213, 3251, 3255, 3272, 3348, 3424, 3468 and 3472.

[72]Schröder, p. 61.

[73]Ibid.

[74]Ibid., pp. 61-62.

[75]Curschmann, p. 11.

[76]Ibid., p. 43.

[77]Ibid.

[78]Ibid., p. 44.

[79]Ibid. The quotation within the quotation is taken from Ehrismann, II, 1, 306.

[80]Ehrismann, II, 1, 306.

[81]Curschmann, p. 29.

[82]Ibid., p. 44.

[83]Ibid., p. 45.

[84]Ibid.

[85]Ibid.

[86]Ibid., p. 101.

[87]König Rother, ed. Theodor Frings and Joachim Kuhnt, Altdeutsche Texte für den Akademischen Unterricht, No. 2 (Halle: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1961), line 5. All references to this work will be taken from this edition of the text.

[88]Schröder, p. 32.

[89]Ehrismann, II, 1, 304.

[90]Ibid.

[91]See Schröder, p. 33: "Eben deswegen verweigert dieser [Constantine] die Hand seiner Tochter: er will seine Herrschaft an niemanden abgeben, mit niemandem teilen (im 'St. Oswald' will der Vater aus dem gleichen Grunde sogar seine eigene Tochter heiraten)."

[92]See 442ff.: "Rother vf eime steine || saz./ we trvrich ime sin herze was./ dre tage | vnde drie nacht./ Daz er zo niemanne niht| ne sprach." Ehrismann notes that Rother's sadness and preoccupation about the fate of his messengers is indicative of the strong bond of triuwe that binds him to his men. Ehrismann II, 1, 303.

[93]See 590ff.: "Nu vore | golt vnde schaz/ Des ein michil man-craft.|/ indiner kameren./ is gelegit zo samene./ des | bistu kuninc riche/ nu teilene vrumeliche.|/ min vil lieber herre./ da mide stent din | ere." The counselors urge Rother to be generous as a means of preserving his honor. If he promises his men ample reward, they will help him, and his honor will remain intact.

[94]Curschmann, p. 102.

[95]Berchter's comment to Rother, "Du bist richir dan constantin" (1243) makes explicit what has already been demonstrated by Rother.

[96]Curschmann, p. 102.

[97]Schröder, p. 33.

[98]Ibid.

[99]Ibid., p. 34.

[100]Ibid., p. 33.

[101]Since, as we noted above, Herzog Ernst was clearly influenced by Wolfram's Parzival and the Lanzelet of Ulrich von Zazikhoven, it could have been written only after these works, i.e., sometime after the first decade of the thirteenth century.

[102]DeBoor, II, 1.

Chapter III

[1]At this point we must reiterate what we stated at the conclusion of the previous chapter. We hesitate to define the courtly period solely in terms of chronology. This hesitation is shared by a number of literary scholars. DeBoor, for example, notes that Veldeke's Eneide clearly marks the beginning of a new direction in medieval German literature; but in classifying the epic as an "early courtly" work, he states: "Mit der Bezeichnung 'frühhöfischer Roman' wollen wir nur bedingt eine zeitliche Stufenfolge festlegen." DeBoor, II, 21; our underlining. He goes on to observe that the first early courtly works were written around 1160-1170, approximately ten to twenty years earlier than Hartmann's Erec, which ushered in the "höfische Hochblüte" or the "klassische Zeit"; and yet, the type of work which is considered to belong to the "early courtly period" continued to be written for a long time after the "classical period" had begun. DeBoor therefore concludes: "Der Ausdruck 'frühhöfisch' gewinnt damit neben einer zeitlichen eine typologische Bedeutung." Ibid., pp. 20-21. For DeBoor, the word "hochhöfisch", like "frühhöfisch", is primarily the designation of a type of literary work rather than of a particular period of time. Ibid., p. 63. Like DeBoor, we prefer to define the courtly period in terms of the literary merit of individual works rather than in terms of fixed chronology.

[2]DeBoor, II, 7.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Ibid., p. 8.

[5]Ibid., p. 9.

[6]Karl Otto Brogsitter, Artusepik, Sammlung Metzler, 38 (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1965), p. 41.

[7]Ibid.

[8]Ibid., p. 47.

[9]Ibid., p. 49. In his discussion of the meaning and significance of Chrétien's works, Brogsitter asserts: "Gewiß waren Chrétiens Werke in erster Linie zur Unterhaltung der neuen höfischen Gesellschaft und in besonderen ihrer anspruchvollsten Schichten bestimmt."

[10]Ibid., p. 70. For a discussion of the introduction of Arthurian romance in Germany, see Brogsitter, pp. 70ff.

[11]Ibid., p. 71. Brogsitter bases his statement that Tristrant is the first German work to mention Arthur on the assumption that the work had already been written in the 1170's. He hesitates to classify Tristrant as the first Arthurian novel in Germany, "da in diesem Werk die Artuswelt nur eine Episode bleibt und Eilharts Epos noch kaum der Gattung des höfischen Artusromanes zugerechnet werden kann."

[12]Despite the fact that Gottfried's Tristan does not fit the traditional definition of Arthurian epic (" . . . jene großen Verserzählungen und die ihnen nachfolgenden Prosaromane des hohen und späten Mittelalters, die ihren Stoff aus der Fabelwelt um König Arthur und die Ritter seiner Tafelrunde nehmen," Brogsitter, p. 1), it is commonly included by literary critics in discussions of this genre.

[13]In making this statement, we acknowledge our agreement with Wapnewski's interpretation of the central conflict in Erec: "Das Problem des 'Erek' ist der Konflikt zwischen minne und Ritterpflicht, zwischen Liebe und Herrscheramt." Peter Wapnewski, Hartmann von Aue, 2nd ed., Sammlung Metzler, 17 (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1964), p. 46. The words "Ritterpflicht" and "Herrscheramt" can be subsumed under the heading of êre. Wapnewski's interpretation of the central theme of the work corresponds to a degree to that of DeBoor: "An dem vorbildlichen Dasein eines Artusritters [Erec] stellt und löst sich im dialektischen Gegeneinander der beiden großen Pole des höfischen Lebens - Ehre und Minne - das Problem des vollkommenen Ritters." DeBoor, II, 70.

[14]See Wapnewski, pp. 46-47: "Die Aufgabe scheint klar: Es kann ein Verhalten, das in sich einen Wert darstellt, zum Unwert werden durch unmâze, wenn es die Harmonie der Lebensordnungen zerstört und outriert wird. Im Falle Ereks handelt es sich bei diesem Wert um den einen Pol aristokratisch-höfischen Daseins: die minne-Liebe. Er gerät in Konflikt mit dem anderen: der fürstlich-ritterlichen Bewährung in der Öffentlichkeit. Mithin gilt es, diese ritterliche Bewährung zu demonstrieren, durch männliche Heldentat das gestörte Gleichgewicht wiederherzustellen und mit ihm die êre." DeBoor, too, stresses the significance of mâze in the work: "Das Problem der Bildung des vollkommenen Menschen aus dem harmonischen Ausgleich zweier bestimmender Pole ist das Problem der mâze. In der mâze und ihrer Bedeutung ist Hartmanns Wesen bestimmt . . . . " DeBoor, II, 73.

[15]Hartmann von Aue, Erec, ed. Albert Leitzmann, 2nd ed., Altdeutsche Textbibliothek, No. 39 (Halle: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1960), line 252. All quotations from Erec will be taken from this edition of the text.

[16]It is noteworthy that Chrétien depicts this scene quite differently than Hartmann. In the French version of the epic, we find no passage which corresponds to lines 366ff. of Hartmann's Erec. There, in contrast, Erec's host, though poor, is still able to employ a

servant who prepares an altogether adequate meal of meat, fowl, bread and wine for the guest. Similarly, Chrétien remarks only that beds with white sheets and soft pillows were prepared that night. He makes no mention of the contrast between what Erec's hosts wanted to do for their guest and what little they were actually able to provide. Thus we see in 366ff. an expression of Hartmann's own concept of the nature of milte.

[17]We must recall that Erec took leave of the queen and set out in pursuit of the unknown knight without weapons, money or possessions of any kind (see 238 and 242ff.); hence he cannot immediately provide Koralus with the means to overcome his poverty.

[18]See Thomasin, 14291ff.: "swer mit zorn und leide gît,/ dem danke ichs zuo deheiner zît./ er hat durch milte gegeben niht,/ swelhem manne daz geschiht." The idea that reluctant or sorrowful giving is antithetical to milte will be discussed at length in a later chapter. At this point it is sufficient to mention that the seed of this idea had already been planted in Hartmann's times and even earlier, as we saw in our discussion of Veldeke's Eneide.

[19]Armin Meng, Vom Sinn des ritterlichen Abenteuers bei Hartmann von Aue (Zürich: Juris Verlag, 1967), pp. 26-27.

[20]In the words of Armin Meng, " . . . er [Erec] wird gleich zum vorbildlichen höfischen Menschen erklärt." Ibid., p. 26.

[21]The distinction between giving "von reht" and "nâch rehte", which is implicit in this passage, is clearly articulated by Thomasin in his Welscher Gast, 13584ff. To give "von reht" is to give each person what is rightfully his or what is owed to him, in accordance with the laws of justice. To give "nâch rehte", on the other hand, is to give out of the spirit of milte, which goes beyond the limits of justice. Such giving is prompted by "miltem muot" or "rîchem muot", i.e., by a noble, generous and willing spirit rather than by a sense of obligation or indebtedness.

[22]DeBoor considers Erec's behavior towards Koralus and his family at an even earlier juncture in the text as evidence of milte in the sense of erbärmde: "Seine [Erecs] zuht aber erweist sich als die schöne Bildung eines edlen Innern. Sie wird zu taktvoll-demütiger Bescheidenheit (erbärmde) vor der edel ertragenen Armut des Grafen, vor der Schönheit der Jungfrau im zerrissenen Kleid." DeBoor, II, 70. While it is true that Erec shows a sympathetic understanding of his host's impoverished situation and, in accordance with the dictates of zuht, treats Koralus and his family with courtesy and respect, the use of the word erbärmde to describe tact, humility and modesty seems somewhat inappropriate. The word zuht rather than erbärmde more accurately describes Erec's attitude and behavior towards the "edelarmen".

[23]Erec's youth accounts for the queen's reluctance to allow him to ride in pursuit of Iders:

der küniginne was vil leit
daz er alsô junger reit
ûf sô grôze vreise:
si bat in lân die reise. (144ff.)

A subsequent passage from the text indicates even more clearly Erec's lack of exposure to knightly perils and aventiure prior to his encounter with Iders. After Erec has defeated his formidable opponent, Hartmann describes the reaction of Arthur and the queen with the following words:

von disen maeren wurden dô
vil herzenlîche vrô
Artus und die künegîn
und lobetens unsern trehtîn,
daz im alsô jungen
sô schône was gelungen
und im sîn êrstiu ritterschaft
mit lobelîcher heiles kraft
iedoch alsô gar ergie:
wan er begundes vor nie. (1260ff.; our underlining)

[24]Meng, p. 25.

[25]That Iders has learned from his encounter with Erec is revealed by his words to the queen:

'wan ich dar an gevolget hân
tumbes herzen râte.
nû riuwetz mich ze spâte.
jâ warne mich ze unzît
sam der hase sô er in dem netze lît.
des ist mîn riuwe worden breit.
ez ist et als man dâ seit,
daz unrehter hôchmuot
dem manne lîhte schaden tuot.' (1223ff.)

[26]Meng, p. 38.

[27]Wapnewski, p. 48.

[28]Meng, p. 47. The quotation within the quotation is taken from W. Ohly. Meng correctly observes that Mabonagrin's dedication to love, fostered in total isolation from society, precisely parallels Erec's earlier situation in Karnant, where Erec ignored his duties as king in order to dedicate himself exclusively to his relationship with Enite. By defeating Mabonagrin, Erec demonstrates that such a life style is forever behind him. In addition, he frees Mabonagrin from the same self-centered, immoderate life style, thereby returning him to society and restoring joy to the realm.

[29]Wapnewski, p. 51.

[30]Ibid.

[31]For a discussion of the chronology of Hartmann's works, see Wapnewski, pp. 20-25. Wapnewski acknowledges the difficulties involved in establishing even a tentative chronology of the life and works of Hartmann; he suggests that Erec should perhaps be dated between 1180 and 1190, and that Iwein was probably written between 1199 and 1205.

[32]Hartmann von Aue, Iwein (Textausgabe) (Berlin: Walter DeGruyter and Co., 1968), 7131ff. All quotations from Iwein will be taken from this edition of the text.

[33]The couple's selfless generosity calls to mind the courtly belief that to give with the hope of receiving something in return is antithetical to the spirit of milte. (See Thomasin, 14333f.: "Swer durch milte geben wil/ ahte ûf gelt niht ze vil.") There is not the slightest hint that the couple behaves generously and hospitably because they hope that Iwein will repay them by challenging Harpin.

[34]Meng, p. 23.

[35]Ibid.

[36]Ibid., p. 58.

[37]Wapnewski, pp. 66-67.

[38]Ibid., p. 65.

[39]Thomas Cramer, "Saelde und Ere in Hartmanns 'Iwein'," Hartmann von Aue, ed. Hugo Kuhn and Christoph Cormeau, Wege der Forschung, Vol. 359 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1973), p. 431: "Daß Iweins Schuld kaum in der Versäumnis eines willkürlich gesetzten Termines liegen könne, daß seine Vergeßlichkeit vielmehr Symptom einer tieferen 'Zuchtlosigkeit' sei, wird schon von Sparnaay vermutet. Daß diese eigentliche Verfehlung in Mangel an erbermde bestehe, sich manifestierend in der Tötung des Königs Ascalon, wurde erst jüngst mit Deutlichkeit von Wapnewski festgestellt."

[40]Ibid., p. 440.

[41]Kurt Ruh, "Zur Interpretation von Hartmanns 'Iwein'," Hartmann von Aue, ed. Hugo Kuhn and Christoph Cormeau, p. 418.

[42]Ibid., pp. 415-416.

[43]Ibid., p. 416: " . . . kein - nicht ein einziges - Abenteuer Iweins, in dem es nicht im besonderen darum ginge, seine triuwe unter Beweis zu stellen . . . ." Ruh argues that Iwein's rescue of Lunete is motivated by loyalty and gratitude to her for having previously saved his life. He also maintains that Iwein's intervention on behalf on the lion represents "vorbildlich und sinnbildlich das, was unser Held auf seiner Prüfungsfahrt zu leisten hat: Treue und Dankbarkeit." Although the elements of loyalty and gratitude are certainly involved in these incidents, the main accent is on the compassion which Iwein displays in each of his aventiuren in the second half of the work. It seems somewhat far-fetched to argue that Iwein challenges Âliers out of loyalty and gratitude to the Dame von Narison or that he sides with the younger Gräfin vom Schwarzen Dorn for those reasons.

[44]See Cramer, p. 433: "Ascalon redet in den Termini des Fehderechtes. Kalogreant hat sich einer vastatio terrarum schuldig gemacht (v. 716-17) ohne rechtzeitige Fehde-Ansage (v. 713), die, was seit Friedrich I. gesetzlich festgelegt war, der Fehde drei Tage und drei Nächte vorauszugehen hatte."

[45]Ibid.

[46]Ibid., p. 432.

[47]Wapnewski, p. 67.

[48]Ibid., p. 65.

[49]The symbol of the lion is interpreted somewhat differently by various Iwein scholars. For Ruh, the lion represents loyalty and gratitude (see footnote 43). Cramer, on the other hand, notes that in the Middle Ages the lion is, among other things, the symbol of justice, whereas the dragon represents the devil or the incarnation of evil. Thus he concludes: "Indem Iwein den Löwen aus den Klauen des Drachen befreit, rettet er das Recht aus den Fängen des Bösen." Cramer, pp. 437-438. Meng, who provides a most thorough analysis of the various meanings of lion and dragon, observes that the lion generally symbolizes Christ in Christian allegory and always in the Physiologus. The dragon is recognized as the incorporation of all that is inimical to the divine order in both the Old and New Testament, and as the Arch-adversary in Greek, Persian, Indian and Chinese mythology. In the Christian religion it is the symbol of evil. We agree with Meng's conclusions: "Wir gehen also wohl nicht fehl, wenn wir in Hartmanns Roman in Löwe und Drache die elementaren Gegensätze von Gut und Böse sehen und deshalb der Entscheidung Iweins eine große Bedeutung beimessen." And further: "Iwein erweist sich in allen seinen Handlungen als musterhafte Ritter. Sein Leben steht unter den Zeichen von triuwe und erbermde und ist geprägt von aktiver Barmherzigkeit und totalem Einsatz für den Nächsten. Der Kampf gegen den

Drachen ist also letztlich ein Kampf gegen den Drachen in Iwein selbst, gegen alles, was ihn an einer vorbildlichen christlichen Lebensweise hätte hindern können." Meng, pp. 62-63.

[50]Wapnewski, p. 66.

[51]Ibid., p. 64.

[52]Ibid., p. 65.

[53]Wolfram von Eschenbach, Parzival (Studienausgabe) (Berlin: Walter DeGruyter and Co., 1965; rpt. of the 1926 Berlin and Leipzig ed.), 115, 11. All quotations from Parzival will be taken from this edition of the text.

[54]DeBoor, II, 91. In his analysis of the well-known interlude between Books II and III of Parzival, DeBoor accurately observes that Wolfram engages in polemics against Reinmar, "den Typus des höfischen Minneritters", because Wolfram does not identify with this "spezialisierten, überfeinerten Wesen des Hofritters". Wolfram also draws a careful distinction between himself and the "schulgebildeten, gelehrten Ritter" such as Hartmann, with whom he also feels little personal affinity. It is significant that Wolfram chooses precisely the beginning of the actual tale of his hero Parzival as the juncture at which to provide his reader with an unambiguous definition of his own brand of knighthood. Clearly DeBoor is not exaggerating when he says of Wolfram: "Er ist ritterbürtig und sich seines Rittertums stolz bewußt."

[55]Julius Schwietering, "Parzivals Schuld," Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum, 81 (1944/46), 54.

[56]Brogsitter, p. 78.

[57]"Amor was sîn krîe" (478, 30) summarizes the principal failing of Anfortas. By placing his own interests (minne and aventiure) ahead of his responsibilities for the welfare of his kingdom, Anfortas demonstrates a decided lack of "rîcher muot", and that lack is directly responsible for the misfortune which befalls his kingdom.

[58]The traditional treatment of milte is seen in Wolfram's depiction of Arthur, who, as the symbol of courtliness and of the ideals of knighthood, is customarily portrayed as a generous ruler throughout medieval German literature. As Gawan departs from Arthur at the end of Book VI, Arthur generously provides him with rich gifts (335, 26ff.). Wolfram also attributes the virtue of milte to Anfortas (519, 28; 815, 14f.). Even heroes such as Isenhart (26, 17f.) and Loherangrîn (825, 9) who do not play a major role in the epic are explicitly characterized as milte, as is Wolfram's patron, Herman of Thuringia (297, 16ff.), who,

the poet laments, has attracted a number of unworthy followers among the many men who have responded to his generosity. The "Baruch" is portrayed in a favorable light because he does not spare the cost in providing a rich and splendid funeral for his servant Gahmuret (106, 30ff.). It also belongs to the conventions of courtly life that a knight, upon his departure in search of aventiure, should receive gifts from those who are closest to him. Thus Gahmuret's mother liberally bestows rich and elegant gifts upon him at the time of his departure (11, 10ff.), as does his beloved (12, 3ff.).

[59]Wolfram's treatment of milte within the context of the "hochzît" is reminiscent of its treatment in similar passages found in the earlier works with which we have dealt. The generosity of Clamide at his wedding, for example, is so great that it inspires many impoverished knights and wandering minstrels to remain with him and accompany him to his kingdom (336, 17ff.). Milte also plays its traditional role at the wedding celebration of Obie and Meljanz (397, 7f.).

[60]"dô truoc der helt milte/ ûf einem hermîn schilte . . . . " (18, 5f.) occurs as part of a description of Gahmuret.

[61]
der künec siufte unde sprach
'owe daz ich dich ie gesach,
sît du mit schimphlîchen siten
mîn ganzez herze hâst versniten,
unt tuost op wir uns scheiden.' (8, 27ff.)

[62]Wolfram stresses Galoes' generosity of spirit by indicating that the king gives his brother even more than the latter desires and by calling attention to the willingness with which Galoes exercises generosity:

Der künec in alles werte,
mere denne er selbe gerte;
fünf ors erwelt und erkant,
de besten über al sîn lant,
küene, starc, niht ze laz;
manec tiwer goltvaz,
und mangen guldînen klôz.
der künec wênec des verdrôz,
er enfultes im vier soumschrîn:
gesteines muose ouch vil dar în. (9, 29ff.)

[63]The following speeches of Gahmuret serve as clear indications of his priorities:

'ich wil kêren in diu lant.
ich hân ouch ê ein teil gevarn.
ob mich geliicke wil bewarn,
so erwirbe ich guotes wîbes gruoz.' (8, 8f.)

'mîn herze iedoch nâch hoehe strebet:
ine weiz war umbez alsus lebet,
daz mir swillet sus mîn winster brust.
ôwê war jaget mich mîn gelust?
ich solz versuochen, ob ich mac.' (9, 23ff.)

[64]See David Blamires, Characterization and Individuality in Wolfram's 'Parzival' (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), p. 47: "Once Gahmuret has married Herzeloyde his relationship with her is of the most intimate, but the force of adventure which had driven him away from Belecane also separates him from his second wife and leads to his death. In this instance, however, it is a call from outside, from his liege lord the caliph, which causes the separation. The love of adventure is the bane of Gahmuret . . . ." Blamires inquires into the extent to which Gahmuret typifies the courtly knight "whose aims of minne and aventiure are identical with his" and concludes: "The Erec and Iwein of Hartmann von Aue are exercises in the search for mâze, and Gahmuret's adventures may also be looked upon in this light, but with the difference that he does not achieve, even at the end, a genuine balance between minne and aventiure." Ibid., p. 38. Dennis Green also notes that aventiure is and remains the predominant motivating force in Gahmuret's life: "Gahmuret gelingt es Zeit seines Lebens nie, seine beiden Hauptinteressen (Abenteuer und Minne) miteinander in Einklang zu bringen . . . .", a fact which is readily substantiated by a careful reading of the text. Dennis H. Green, "Der Auszug Gahmurets," Wolfram-Studien, ed. Werner Schröder (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 1970), p. 79.

[65]Blamires, p. 52.

[66]Ibid., pp. 52-53.

[67]Ibid., p. 42.

[68]Wolfram explicitly refers to Parzival as "tump" in the following lines, all of which occur in Book III before Parzival receives the counsel of Gurnemanz: 124, 16; 126, 19; 139, 14; 142, 13; 149, 6; 155, 19; 156, 10 and 24; 161, 6, 17 and 25; 162, 1 and 28; 163, 21; 167, 11.

[69]Heinz Rupp, "Die Funktion des Wortes tump im 'Parzival' Wolframs von Eschenbach," Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift, 38 (1957), 99.

[70]Blamires, p. 164.

[71]Rupp, p. 101.

[72]Otto Georg von Simson, "Über das Religiöse in Wolframs 'Parzival'," Wolfram von Eschenbach, ed. Heinz Rupp, Wege der Forschung, Vol. 57 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1966), p. 214.

[73] dô dâhte der den sic hât
sân an Gurnemanzes rât,
daz ellenthafter manheit
erbärme solte sîn bereit.
sus volget er dem râte nâch:
hin ze Clâmîde er sprach . . . . (213, 29ff.)

[74] Parzival is described as milte when, in accordance with the behavior expected of him as the new king of his wife's realm, he distributes riches among his people, thereby winning their favor:

sîn sweher Tampenteire
liez im ûf Pelrapeire
lieht gesteine und rôtez golt:
daz teilter sô daz man im holt
was durch sîne milte. (222, 15ff.)

The formulation "sô daz man im holt was" commonly occurs in precourtly and early courtly literature in conjunction with milte, a fact which further indicates that Parzival is fulfilling traditional expectations rather than demonstrating that he possesses the attribute of "rîcher muot".

[75] Parzival's conduct at Munsalvaesche - specifically his failure to ask the question which would heal Anfortas - is traditionally discussed in secondary literature from the point of view of the hero's guilt. For a discussion of secondary literature relating to the question of Parzival's guilt, see Joachim Bumke, Die Wolfram von Eschenbach Forschung seit 1945 (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1970), especially pp. 121ff. and 150ff. Although the problem of Parzival's guilt is a significant one, we are primarily interested in the extent to which the hero's failings are indicative not of his guilt but of his lack of "rîcher muot".

[76] That it was indeed zuht which prompted Parzival to remain silent is also evident in the following lines:

'Sol ich durch mîner zuht gebot
hoeren nu der werlte spot,
sô mac sîn râten niht sîn ganz:
mir riet der werde Gurnemanz
daz ich vrâvellîche vrâge mite
und immer gein unfuoge strite.' (330, 1ff.)

[77] Wolfgang Mohr, "Parzival und Gawan," Wolfram von Eschenbach, ed. Heinz Rupp, p. 291.

[78] von Simson, p. 222.

[79] Blamîres, p. 307.

[80]It should be noted that Parzival's words to Trevrizent on this occasion are a reiteration of his admission of guilt and of his request for advice from Sigune (442, 1f.). His encounter with Sigune has awakened in him the realization that he has indeed incurred guilt and that he can no longer pursue his present course of action, and he carries this knowledge with him to Trevrizent.

[81]von Simson, p. 224.

[82]Rupp, p. 102.

[83]Ibid.

[84]Even in the situations in which Gawan is portrayed as milte within the framework of convention, his generosity of spirit shines forth. The youths in his service receive more than the traditional reward for their efforts:

> Si wâren im durch sippe holt
> unt dienden im ûf sînen solt.
> werdekeit gap er ze lône,
> unt pflac ir anders schône. (430, 1ff.; our underlining)

Furthermore, Gawan's reputation for generosity is widespread. Thus Plippalinot willingly aids him, acknowledging that if Gawan becomes king of the land, he will surely increase the riches of his servant. (560, 5ff.). Gawan promises to repay the efforts of the ferryman (562, 11ff.), and later he keeps his pledge. When he becomes king, Plippalinot's daughter is the first to receive a rich gift from him (663, 15ff.). Even the knights of the realm who are unknown to him are the recipients of his boundless generosity:

> niemen dâ moht enkelten,
> ob er im was unrekant:
> des milten Gâwânes hant
> begunde in sô mit willen gebn
> als er niht langer wolde lebn.
> sarjande, rîter, frouwen,
> muosn enpfâhn und schouwen
> sîne gâbe sô groezlîche,
> daz si sprachen al gelîche,
> in waer diu wâre hilfe komn. (666, 6ff.)

The words "sô mit willen" serve to underscore the fact that Gawan's generosity is the manifestation of "rîcher muot". Concern for the welfare of his people is uppermost in his mind, and it is to this end that he utilizes his vast wealth:

> wie der von Norwaege
> sînes volkes pflaege,
> der rîter unt der frouwen?
> dâ mohten rîchheit schouwen
> Artûs unt sîn gesinde
> von des werden Lôtes kinde. (676, 3ff.)

[85]For an excellent treatment of the Gawan figure, see Michael B. Herzog, "The Development of Gawan as a Literary Figure in Medieval German and English Arthurian Romance," Diss. University of Washington 1971.

[86]Mohr, p. 304.

[87]Ibid.

[88]Ibid., p. 295.

[89]The attitude of "rîcher muot" is manifested by other characters as well, beginning with Arthur himself. At the "hochzît" which marks the end of Book XV, Gramoflanz and Gawan bear the cost of the festivities, as is their duty. Although Arthur is a guest in the land, he, too, makes a generous contribution to the celebration, giving above and beyond what is expected of him (775, 27ff.). The good will with which Arthur and his entire court receive Feirefiz into their midst ("in tâten guoten willen schîn," 765, 27) is also suggestive of the attitude of "rîcher muot". Scherules, too, displays generosity and nobility of spirit. He warmly welcomes Gawan into his jurisdiction (362, lff.) and promises him service and protection, which he faithfully renders despite Obie's deprecating remarks. It is in large measure Plipallinot's generosity to Gawan which facilitates the hero's mission at Schastel Marveille. Plipallinot provides Gawan with the essential information which he lacks about the state of affairs there, and he also gives him the weapons which he must have to undertake the aventiure.

[90]In his article entitled "'güete' bei Wolfram von Eschenbach" (in Festgabe für Friedrich Maurer, ed. Werner Besch, Siegfried Grosse and Heinz Rupp, Düsseldorf: Pädagogischer Verlag Schwann, 1968), Gerhard Meissburger distinguishes three types of güete which are correctly described by Bumke as "1. die güete Gottes als die erbarmende Liebe des Vaters zu seinen Kindern; 2. die kiusche güete von allem Gyburge und Parzivals als irdisches Abbild der göttlichen güete und als die Kraft und Fähigkeit, vom Leid zu erlösen; 3. die ritterlich-weltliche güete bei Christen und Heiden, die sich in der Aneignung von milte, diemüete, zuht und triuwe verwirklicht." Bumke, p. 105. Meissburger notes that güete, of which milte is one manifestation, "kann als ein wesentliches Kennzeichen der ritterlichen Lebensführung christlich sein; aber sie muß es nicht, wo sie prägendes Signum ist für ein irdisch vorbildliches Verhalten auch der Heidenritter." Meissburger, p. 172.

[91]See Wolfgang Mohr, "Landgraf Kingrimursel: Zum VIII. Buch von Wolframs Parzival," Philologia deutsch, 1965, pp. 21-28.

[92]Ibid., p. 29.

[93]Ibid., p. 30.

[94]In reference to Wolfram's reaction to the counterpart of Liddamus in Chrétien's work, Mohr states: "Völlig zuwider war ihm der 'kluge Ratgeber', dieser gerissene Jurist und Politiker, und er machte ihn zu - Liddamus." Ibid., p. 28.

[95]Forms of the word milte are found in the following lines of the text; in none of these instances is the word explicitly or directly associated with the attitude of "rîcher muot": 9, 10; 18, 5; 26, 17; 92, 20; 142, 24; 150, 11; 170, 27; 222, 19; 297, 20; 328, 27; 336, 17; 519, 28; 666, 8; 730, 11; 768, 16; 815, 15; 825, 9.

[96]The famous literary excursus in Tristan (4621ff.) provides us with insight into the chronology of the major German courtly epics. Gottfried mentions Heinrich von Veldeke as deceased, and he praises Walther and Hartmann. Although we cannot assume with absolute certainty that it is Wolfram whose work comes under attack, it is most probable that Gottfried is directing his criticism at the prologue of Parzival. On the basis of these clues, we conclude that Tristan was completed in its fragmentary form after the masterpieces of Hartmann and Wolfram, i.e., ca. 1210.

[97]Brogsitter, p. 103.

[98]Ibid., p. 104.

[99]Arthur is mentioned twice by the author during the "Minnegrotte" episode:

> ir zweier geselleschaft
> diu was in zwein [Tristan and Isolde] so herehaft,
> daz der saelige Artus
> nie in dekeinem sinem hus
> so groze hohgezit gewan,
> da mere ir libe lustes van
> und wunne waere entstanden. (16859ff.)
>
> ir hohzit was diu minne,
> ir vröuden übergulde,
> diu brahtin durch ir hulde
> des tages ze tusent stunden
> Artuses tavelrunden
> und alle ir massenie dar. (16896ff.)

These quotations and all quotations from the text are cited according to Tristan und Isold, ed. Friedrich Ranke, 15th ed. (Dublin/Zürich: Weidmann, 1970).

[100]DeBoor, II, 135.

[101]Ibid.

[102]Brogsitter, p. 106.

[103]Ibid.

[104]Ibid.

[105]Wolfgang Spiewok, "Zum Begriff 'edelez herze' bei Gottfried von Straßburg," Gottfried von Strassburg, ed. Alois Wolf, Wege der Forschung, Vol. 320 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1973), p. 343.

[106]Ibid.

[107]Ibid., p. 353.

[108]Riwalin is explicitly described as milte twice: In the first instance, milte is one of a number of virtues which an exemplary lord traditionally possesses; Riwalin is "getriuwe, küene, milte, rich" (252). In the second, he rewards his people after the truce in his battle against Morgan: "uz milter hant londer in do/ und machetes alle riche." (404f.) On the day of Tristan's "Schwertleite", Marke mentions milte as one of the virtues which Tristan should possess:

'wis milte unde getriuwe
und iemer dar an niuwe!
wan uf min ere nim ich daz,
daz golt noch zobel gestuont nie baz
dem sper unde dem schilte
dan triuwe unde milte.' (5035ff.)

Tristan, in turn, recommends milte to his companions who are knighted along with him (5050). The final occurrence of the word is found in a description of Marke: "schoene unde milte/ zem sper und zem schilte . . . . " (10509f.).

[109]Gisela Hollandt, Die Hauptgestalten in Gottfrieds Tristan, Philologische Studien und Quellen, No. 30 (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 1966), p. 114.

[110]Ibid., p. 83.

[111]The meaning of the love potion has generated great controversy in secondary literature. It is our conviction that the potion deprives Tristan and Isolde of their free will with regard to their choice of the object of love, and this contention seems solidly supported by the text:

mit swem sin ieman getranc,
den muoser ane einen danc
vor allen dingen meinen
und er da wider in einen:
in was ein tot unde ein leben,
ein triure, ein vröude samet gegeben. (11439ff.; our underlining)

For a discussion of this interpretation of the love potion, see H. Furstner, "Der Beginn der Liebe bei Tristan und Isolde in Gottfrieds Epos," Neophilologus, 41 (1957), 25-38. The fact that Tristan at first tries to resist the powerful force of love out of a sense of triuwe and êre is evidence of his nobility of spirit (11741ff.).

[112]Hollandt, p. 99.

[113]Ibid.

[114]Petrus Tax views Tristan's use of list from a totally different perspective: "Einmal ist Tristan durchaus kein Mensch, der von Dichter als Idealgestalt im Sinne des zeitgenössischen Rittertethos hingestellt wird. Vielmehr erscheint er überall als ausgesprochener Spieler, dem alle Mittel zur Erreichung seiner Ziele heilig sind." Petrus W. Tax, Wort, Sinnbild, Zahl im Tristanroman, Philologische Studien und Quellen, No. 8 (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 1971), p. 62. Unlike Hollandt, Tax overlooks the positive effects of the various liste which Tristan uses.

[115]Hollandt, p. 53.

[116]Ibid., p. 62.

[117]Morolt's use of poison in his confrontation with Tristan constitutes a violation of justice and is one further sign of the ignobility of Tristan's opponent.

Chapter IV

[1]For a discussion of the system of values inherent in the Nibelungenlied and in the Kudrun, see "Die Generationen" and particularly "Altes und Neues Ethos" in Karl Stackmann's introduction to the text of the Kudrun, 5th ed., Deutsche Klassiker des Mittelalters (Wiesbaden: F. A. Brockhaus, 1965), pp. XXXVff. Stackmann calls attention to the contrast between the younger and older generation in the Kudrun, noting that the former is inclined to forgiveness and reconciliation, whereas the latter is stubbornly intent upon revenge. He rightly observes that the work represents a turning away from the ethos of a bygone era, but he doubts that this change came about "als Ergebnis einer produktiven Auseinandersetzung mit dem Unzeitgemäßen der alten Dichtung." (p. XXXVI) Instead, he believes that the spirit of reconciliation which is inherent in the Kudrun (but absent from the Nibelungenlied) can be attributed to the dependence of the Kudrun poet on the literary models of his era which lack a tragic ending, particularly the "Spielmannsdichtung". Since the poet is working with a plot that is already familiar to his audience, he is not at liberty to alter it in a radical way; thus it is understandable that he depicts figures such as Wate and Gerlint as representatives of an older, less conciliatory and less courtly ethos. Nevertheless, his treatment of the members of the younger generation (particularly Kudrun) as well as the happy ending which he gives the epic, reflects the values and ideals of the courtly era during which he writes, and, contrary to Stackmann's assertion, probably does represent a conscious coming to terms with the ethos of a bygone era. A similar observation can be made about the Nibelungenlied, which to a certain extent also reflects the values of an earlier age. Here, too, the poet is working with a familiar plot which he cannot radically alter. He can, however, use that basic plot to depict the tragic consequences of adherence to an older ethos which has little room for forgiveness and reconciliation or for the observance of the spirit of courtliness.

[2]DeBoor, II, 156.

[3]Ibid., p. 159. Prior to DeBoor's treatment of the Nibelungenlied, literary scholarship had focused almost exclusively on the origins of the work as opposed to the relationship of the epic to other literary works of the courtly era and to the thought of the era itself. Although research done during the period of German Romanticism was a notable exception to this trend, Romantic consideration of the epic led to the conclusion that a sharp division existed between the Nibelungenlied as a "Volksepos" and the courtly epics as "Kunstepen". Heusler's contentions - that the epic was written by a "Spielmann" who was only imperfectly familiar with the externals of courtliness and therefore did not succeed in integrating the courtly spirit into his work, and that the work has "einen bestimmten Handlungsablauf, den

der Dichter nicht ändern kann, der fest vorgegeben ist, weil er einmal tief im Volksbewußtsein verwurzelt, dann aber auch weil die Fabel als solche in sich zusammenbrechen würde, wenn bestimmte Handlungsmomente weggelassen werden sollten" - were accepted with little modification by critics such as Ehrismann and Hermann Schneider. Nelly Dürrenmatt, Das Nibelungenlied im Kreis der höfischen Dichtung (Bern: Verlag Herbert Lang, 1945), p. 12. Naumann, of course, later disproved the contention that the Nibelungenlied was the work of a "Spielmann" (see Naumann's commentary on "Spielmannsdichtung" in the Merker/Stammler Reallexikon); but it was DeBoor who opened the way for a consideration of the work from the perspective of courtliness. For a more thorough and detailed discussion of the history of research on the Nibelungenlied, see Dürrenmatt, pp. 7-18.

[4]Dürrenmatt, p. 293; our underlining.

[5]Ibid., p. 298.

[6]DeBoor, II, 202.

[7]Ibid., p. 203.

[8]Ibid., p. 204.

[9]"Sie [the Kudrun] hat ihre nächsten Verwandten fraglos in der Spielmannsdichtung, in Stücken wie dem 'König Rother' oder 'Salman und Morolf'. Hier wie dort steht die breit ausgesponnene Brautwerbungsgeschichte, stehen Entführung und Rückentführung im Mittelpunkt der Handlung. Man kann daher die 'Kudrun', wenn man sie nicht von den gleichfalls vorhandenen Beziehungen zur Heldendichtung her deuten will, durchaus als Spätling im Kreise der Spielmannsromane auffassen." Stackmann, p. XXXVII.

[10]Stackmann notes that "etwas vom heroischen und tragischen Geist der echten Heldendichtung" is found in the Kudrun (Ibid., p. XXXVIII); but he points to the happy end of the work - an end brought about by the spirit of reconciliation - and to the courtly treatment of minne in the epic as clear departures from the purely heroic genre. See pp. XXXVIf.

[11]Ibid., p. XXXVIII.

[12]Stackmann presents convincing arguments for setting 1231-32 as the most probable date of origin of the Kudrun. For a discussion of his arguments and a summary of other opinions on the topic, see pp. VIIIff. of his introduction to the text.

[13]Das Nibelungenlied, ed. Helmut DeBoor according to the edition of Karl Bartsch, 19th ed., Deutsche Klassiker des Mittelalters (Wiesbaden: F. A. Brockhaus, 1967), 41, 1ff. All quotations from the Nibelungenlied will be taken from this edition of the text.

[14]As in the case of Siegfried's "Schwertleite", the author not only provides us with a detailed account of the generosity displayed at the wedding of Gunther and Brunhild (687) but also ends the description of the festivities with a reiteration of the extraordinary generosity manifested on that occasion:

Ê daz mán die rîche gâbe alle dâ verswanc,
die wider ze lande wolden, die dûhte des ze lanc.
ez enwart nie geste mêre baz gepflegen.
sus endete sich diu hôhzît: daz wolde Gunther der degen. (689)

In both instances it would seem that the author employs the rhetorical principle of placing the most important factor, i.e. milte, last, so that it will stand out in the mind of the reader. The generosity witnessed at Gunther's wedding is exceeded only by the milte displayed when Siegfried returns to his land accompanied by his bride. The author dedicates two full stanzas to the liberality which honors their arrival (711 and 712). Milte also plays a prominent role at the wedding of Etzel and Kriemhild. Here, as on the occasion of Siegfried's "Schwertleite", milte appears to be synonymous with boundless giving. (See 1369-70; 1372; 1374.)

[15]It must be noted that the messengers at first reject Gunther's gifts. They appear in Gunther's realm as representatives of Etzel, and to accept Gunther's generosity would diminish the honor of their lord. Gunther, who regards himself as Etzel's equal, is insulted by their rejection of his gifts; consequently, the messengers are compelled to accept his offer, lest a serious quarrel ensue. Despite the fact that the author stresses the point of conflict in 1488-90, the offer of gifts is genuine evidence of milte in the traditional sense of the word, as the following lines indicate: "Gîselher und Gêrnôt, Gêre und Ortwîn,/ daz si ouch milte wâren, daz tâten si wol schîn." (1488, 1f.)

[16]Gottfried Weber, Das Nibelungenlied: Problem und Idee (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1963), p. 68.

[17]Ibid., p. 70.

[18]Friedrich Panzer, Das Nibelungenlied: Entstehung und Gestalt (Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 1955), p. 220.

[19]It must be stressed that the negative portrayal of Gunther is, as stated, only somewhat modified. As Panzer correctly states, "Als der Kampf dann wirklich ausbricht, erweist er sich wohl als ein helt ten handen und haut mächtig mit ein auf die Feinde. Aber einen entscheidenden Anteil hat er nirgends an allen den Kämpfen und wird nur selten und im Vorbeigehen erwähnt als von Iring angefallen, ergebnislos verhandelnd mit Etzel wie mit Rüdiger, willig kämpfend gegen die Berner." Panzer also stresses that in the final scene it is not Gunther but Hagen who plays the decisive role. "Im Endkampf

zeigt er noch ein ellen lobelîch, einen hêrlîchen muot, muß aber, kampfmüde, sich Dietrich bald ergeben und verliert sein Leben, als Hagen sich geweigert hat, den Hort zu 'zeigen', so lange noch einer seiner Herren lebt." Ibid., p. 221.

[20]Siegfried's suggestion that Gunther not accept the Saxons' offer of restitution is not only a humane gesture but also a clever political move. He knows that if Gunther allows the Saxons to return home after forgiving them their debt, there is little likelihood that they will again attack Gunther's realm. Such a gesture is calculated to win Gunther the perpetual friendship of his former enemies.

[21]Weber, pp. 25-26.

[22]J. K. Bostock, "The Message of the 'Nibelungenlied'," MLR, 55 (1960), 206.

[23]Ibid.

[24]Weber, p. 36.

[25]Ibid., p. 41.

[26]Ibid., p. 18.

[27]Ibid., p. 76.

[28]Ibid.

[29]Ibid., pp. 78-79.

[30]Panzer, p. 254. To some extent Panzer qualifies his positive assessment of Etzel, noting "daß an ihm auch ein paar kleine Züge bemerkbar machen, die ihn als Beherrscher eines halbbarbarischen Volkes in einen leisen Gegensatz zur abendländischen Ritterschaft bringen." He refers to the passages in the epic which depict Etzel as a king whose subjects fear him (1215) and as one who is also feared outside of his domain because of his "zorn" (1429). Additional qualifications are also found in Weber, p. 76. Both critics agree, however, that the positive traits of Etzel as he is portrayed in the epic far outweigh the negative ones.

[31]Weber, pp. 83-84.

[32]Ibid., p. 84.

[33]Peter Wapnewski, "Rüdigers Schild: Zur 37. Aventiure des Nibelungenliedes," Euphorion 54 (1960), 383.

[34]The interpretation to which we are referring is found in Weber's Nibelungenlied: Problem und Idee, which was cited above.

[35]Jochen Splett, Rüdiger von Bechelaren: Studien zum zweiten Teil des Nibelungenliedes (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1968), p. 44.

[36]Splett's assertion is borne out by the text:
Dô sprach aber Rüedeger: "ê wir rûmen daz lant,
wir müezen ê bereiten wâfen unt gewant,
alsô daz wir's êre vor fürsten mügen hân.
ich wil ze Rîne füeren fünf hundert waetlîcher man." (1155)

[37]See Splett, p. 52: "Von Rüdiger aus gesehen liegt in seinem Schwur nichts Verfängliches, wenn er seiner zukünftigen Herrin alle nur denkbare Unterstützung zusichert. Das Leid, von dem Kriemhild gesprochen hat, bezieht er auf ihr zukünftiges Leben, fern von den Verwandten am Hunnenhof. Sie aber denkt an das Leid, das ihr Hagen durch die Ermordung Siegfrieds zugefügt hat."

[38]See the editor's footnote, p. 338 of the text, in which 2154, 3 is translated in the following manner: "Bleibe ich aber neutral, so machen mir beide Seiten (elliu diet) Vorwürfe." The editor aptly adds, "Und mit Recht, denn erst in der Handlung offenbart sich die innere Gesinnung." See also Splett, p. 89.

[39]The words "dô liez er an die wâge sêle unde lîp" (2166, 1), which precede the statement of Ruedeger's obligation to fight for Etzel, would seem to indicate that Ruedeger chooses to side with Etzel at the risk of his soul, especially if we consider that Ruedeger had earlier expressed fear of losing eternal salvation. Two factors prohibit such an interpretation, however. In the first place, the sequence of events sheds light on the situation. Ruedeger's earlier expression of concern about the welfare of his soul (2150; 2153; 2154) occurred before Etzel's statement which clarified the hero's moral dilemma (2158, 1). In the second place, "sele unde lîp", as it is used in 2166, is most logically understood as Wapnewski interprets it, i.e., as "eine zusammenfassende Formel für die Person des Gemeinten" (Wapnewski, p. 404). Ruedeger has become resigned to the fact that his decision will cost him his life. Splett disputes this interpretation (p. 87), but at the same time he fails to offer a convincing explanation for Ruedeger's unequivocal declaration that he is obliged to fight for Etzel (2166, 3) - a declaration that Ruedeger twice reaffirms (2167, 4; 2178, 1f.).

[40]See Thomasin, 14321ff:
wizzet daz der nâch rehte gît
der sô gît zaller zît
daz er gît mit dem guot
beidiu den willen und den muot.

[41]See Splett, p. 114, for a discussion of the significance of the twenty-seventh aventiure. Splett notes, "Wie vor allem ein Vergleich mit dem entsprechenden Kapitel der Thidrekssaga zeigt, sind diese Szenen im Nibelungenlied stark vom höfischen Geist geprägt. Diese Darstellungsweise entspringt nicht nur der Freude des Dichters am höfischen Lebensstil, sondern dient unter anderem dazu, Rüdiger eingehend zu charakterisieren. Denn gerade die höfischen Formen ermöglichen es, daß sich seine vorbildlichen Eigenschaften in aller Breite entfalten können."

[42]Emil Kettner, "Der Einfluß des Nibelungenliedes auf die Gudrun," Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie, 23 (1891), 202.

[43]Werner Hoffmann, Kudrun: Ein Beitrag zur Deutung der Nachnibelungischen Heldendichtung, Germanistische Abhandlungen, No. 17 (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1967), p. 266.

[44]Ibid., p. 268.

[45]Ibid., pp. 268-269.

[46]Ibid., p. 278.

[47]Kudrun, ed. Karl Bartsch, 5th ed., Deutsche Klassiker des Mittelalters (Wiesbaden: F. A. Brockhaus, 1965). All quotations from the Kudrun will be taken from this edition of the text.

[48]The attribute "wild" appears in conjunction with Hagen's name in the following lines: 106, 1; 124, 1; 198, 1; 199, 4; 226, 4; 239, 2; 250, 4; 255, 4; 259, 2; 312, 1; 315, 1; 319, 2; 337, 3; 353, 4; 362, 1; 381, 1; 408, 4; 433, 1; 447, 1; 472, 4; 492, 4; 509, 4; 519, 3; 527, 1; 553, 4; 566, 4. The word alludes to the realm of the daemonic, as both the means by which Hagen acquired his extraordinary strength and the conduct which he at times exhibits clearly indicate.

[49]Hoffmann, p. 27.

[50]B. Symons maintains that Hagen's reluctance to give up his daughter indirectly represents the incest motif (see his introduction to his edition of the Kudrun, 1914, p. XXXI). Hoffmann's comments on this matter better elucidate the intention of the poet, however. Hoffmann quotes the assertion of Theodor Frings that the motif comes from the "Spielmannsdichtung" (König Rother), but at the same time he

notes that even if this is the case, it explains only the origin of the motif and not the reason for which the poet incorporated it into his work. Hoffmann explains Hagen's reaction towards the suitors of his daughter in the following manner: " . . . auf jeden Fall hat es der 'Kudrun'-Dichter verstanden, Hagens Verhalten als eine Folge seines übermuotes zu einer Grundthematik seines Werkes nicht nur äußerlich in Beziehung zu setzen, sondern sogar in diese einzuschmelzen." Ibid.,p. 30.

[51]Hoffmann, p. 39.

[52]Roswitha Wisniewski, Kudrun, 2nd ed., Sammlung Metzler, 32 (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1969), p. 66. Wisniewski bases her observation on DeBoor's definition of the heroic epic, according to which the main problem is "die Selbstbehauptung der sittlichen Persönlichkeit in einer schicksalhaft-unausweichlichen Lage, wobei der letzten Konzequenz, dem Einsatz des Lebens nirgends ausgewichen wird . . . . " (p. 64). By refusing to bow to expediency, Wisniewski argues, the title heroine upholds her ideals and maintains her dignity. Viewed in this way, the Kudrun can be regarded as an heroic epic.

[53]Ibid., pp. 66-67.

[54]Ibid., p. 67; our underlining.

[55]Hoffmann, p. 105.

[56]Ibid.

[57]Wisniewski, p. 66.

[58]Hoffmann, p. 185.

[59]Wisniewski, p. 67.

[60]See Eckart Loerzer, Eheschließung und Werbung in der 'Kudrun', Münchener Texte und Untersuchungen zur deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters, Vol. 37 (München: Verlag C. H. Beck, 1971), especially pp. 132ff.

Chapter V

[1]DeBoor, II, 402.

[2]Wapnewski dates the Büchlein (properly known as the Klage) soon after 1180. See Wapnewski, Hartmann von Aue, p. 24.

[3]The stanza of the "Reichston" which begins "Ich horte ein wazzer diezen" must be dated before the coronation of Philip of Swabia, i.e., before September 8, 1198, and probably after the proclamation of Otto as king (June 9, 1198). See Friedrich Maurer, Die Politischen Lieder Walthers von der Vogelweide, 2nd ed. (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1964), p. 15.

[4]DeBoor, II, 403.

[5]Karl Hampe, Germany under the Salian and Hohenstaufen Emperors, trans. Ralph Bennett (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1973), p. 236.

[6]For more detailed information about the background and importance of Aquileia and its patriarch, see Hans Teske, Thomasin von Zerclaere: Der Mann und sein Werk, Germanistische Bibliothek, Part II, Vol. 34 (Heidelberg: Carl Winters Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1933), pp. 1-40.

[7]F. W. von Kries, "The Prerogative of Wisdom in the Thirteenth Century: Church, University, Court. Part 3: Wisdom - Its Pursuit as the Proper Quest of Man," Abstracts of the papers presented at the ninth conference of Medieval Studies (Kalamazoo 1974), p. 103.

[8]Charlotte Spartz, "Der Wälsche Gast des Thomasin von Circlaria," Diss. University of Cologne 1960, p. 83.

[9]See also 4750f.: "der wille gît zaller stunde/ den werken namen . . . . " and 4753f.: "diu werc sint übel ode guot/ dar nâch und man hât den muot."

[10]For information on the arrival of the works of Aristotle in the Western World, see Guillermo Fraile, Historia de la Filosofía (Madrid: B.A.C., 1966), especially pp. 281ff. and 643ff.

[11]Aristotle, "Ethica Nicomachea," Vol. IX of The Works of Aristotle, trans. W. D. Ross (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 1120b. All quotations from Aristotle's Ethics will be taken from this edition of the text.

[12]In addition to defining the virtue of liberality, Aristotle also deals with a closely related virtue called "magnificence". This virtue also has to do with generosity, but it operates on a larger scale than liberality in that it deals with the giving of large amounts of wealth and is exercised on great occasions. It, too, is a mean state

which lies between the extremes of shabbiness on the side of deficiency and vulgarity or bad taste on the side of excess. (NE, p. 1121^{b}ff.) Thomasin does not make a distinction between liberality and magnificence as does Aristotle. The term milte appears to encompass generosity on both a small and large scale.

[13]See also NE, p. 1120^{a}. There Aristotle reaffirms the necessity of giving joyfully by stating that the liberal man will give "with pleasure or without pain; for that which is virtuous is pleasant or free from pain - least of all will it be painful."

[14]Spartz, p. 157.

[15]Ibid., p. 85.

[16]See also NE, p. 1120^{a}. There Aristotle states, "And the liberal are almost the most loved of all virtuous characters, since they are useful; and this depends on their giving."

[17]Friedrich Neumann says all that can be stated with certainty about Freidank's origins and social standing: "Freidanks Herkunft werden wir nie ermitteln. Herkunft oder irgendwelches Mäzenatentum müssen ihn gesichert haben. Wenn wir ihn einen Vaganten oder Fahrenden nennen, so meint dies in erster Hinsicht, daß er als halbklerikaler 'gelehrter' Künstler von Beruf ständisch nicht einzuordnen ist." Friedrich Neumann, "Meister Freidank," Mittelhochdeutsche Spruchdichtung, ed. Hugo Moser, Wege der Forschung, Vol. 154 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1972), p. 323. Although the details of Freidank's life are for the most part unknown to us, it is clear from his work itself that the poet possessed a thorough knowledge of the writings of the Church Fathers and of early Scholastic theology and philosophy. For a discussion of Freidank's familiarity with the learning of his time, see Günter Eifler, Die Ethischen Anschauungen in 'Freidanks Bescheidenheit', Hermea: Germanistische Forschungen, Neue Folge, Vol. 25 (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1969), pp. 27-36.

[18]Neumann asserts that Freidank probably began to collect his "Sprüche" around the year 1215 and that he worked on the Bescheidenheit for approximately twenty years until his death. Neumann, p. 323. DeBoor estimates that the "Akkon-Sprüche" were written in the poet's later years and that the majority of the "Sprüche" which comprise the Bescheidenheit were written earlier; he believes that the work was written between 1215 and 1230. DeBoor, II, 411.

[19]For a brief discussion of the history of the Bescheidenheit manuscripts, see Neumann, p. 310. A more detailed discussion of the problem of the arrangement of the "Sprüche" in the various manuscripts is found in Eifler, pp. 4-27.

[20]See Hermann Paul, "Über die ursprüngliche Anordnung von Freidanks Bescheidenheit," Sitzungsberichte der königl. bayr. Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1899, No. 2, pp. 167-294.

[21]Eifler, p. 14.

[22]Ibid., p. 36.

[23]Freidankes Bescheidenheit, ed. H. E. Bezzenberger (Aalen: Otto Zeller Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1962; rpt. of the 1872 ed.), p. 185. All quotations from the Bescheidenheit will be taken from this edition of the text.

[24]Eifler, p. 45.

[25]Ibid., p. 14.

[26]Neumann, p. 311.

[27]Eifler, p. 380. Eifler correctly notes that the broad definition of milte found in Freidank's work is not contained in the Mittelhochdeutsches Wörterbuch because literary scholarship has tended to define the word too narrowly and exclusively as an attribute of a lord rather than examining its far-reaching implications. Eifler is one of the very few scholars who has dealt with the concept of milte in depth; and his discussion of this concept within the context of Freidank's work constitutes an important contribution to a correct understanding of the word as it was used not only by Freidank but also by many of his contemporaries.

[28]Ibid.

[29]Ibid., p. 381.

[30]Ibid., pp. 385-386.

[31]Eifler discusses the second of these two "Sprüche" within the context of "Gesinnung und Wille als Grundlage der Sittlichkeit", p. 279. It is certainly true that this "Spruch" illustrates Freidank's conviction that the action must be judged according to the intention which motivates it. But the wording of the "Spruch" vividly calls to mind a similar idea about milte expressed by other didactic authors of the courtly period and by authors of the courtly epics as well; thus it is likely that Freidank refers to milte in this "Spruch".

[32]Ibid., p. 387.

[33]See Matthew 7, 16-18 for the origin of this "Spruch".

[34]Eifler, p. 371.

[35]Ibid.

[36]Ibid., p. 372.

[37]This definition of greed is also implicit in the "Spruch" which states: "Man minnet schatz nû mêre/ dan got, lîp, sêle und âre." (147, 1f.)

[38]Eifler, p. 373.

[39]That the greedy man lacks wisdom and sound judgment is also revealed in the lines: "Swie kargen muot der karge truoc,/ er dûhte sich doch milte genuoc." (88, 1f.) Such a man is so blinded by his love of possessions that he fails to realize the extent to which he is gripped by greed. His avaricious attitude and conduct appear quite normal to him, and in his state of self-delusion he even believes that he is the epitome of liberality.

[40]Eifler calls attention to the lines "Des mannes sin/ ist sîn gewin" (56, 5f.), in which Freidank notes that the principal goal of man appears to be the acquisition of material possessions. Both the "herze" and "sin" of man, "also die geistig-seelischen Grundkräfte" are constantly preoccupied by worldly goods. Eifler correctly explains why such an attitude is rejected by Freidank: "Die Beziehung dieser einfachen Feststellung auf Freidanks gesamte ethische Betrachtungsweise läßt keine Unklarheit darüber, daß der gekennzeichnete Sachverhalt sittlich verwerflich und lasterhaft ist; denn das herze, das ze gote streben sol, der sin, der zu Erkenntnis und Anerkennung der göttlichen Gebote angehalten ist, werden von den höchsten sittlichen Pflichten abgewendet, und sie dienen statt dem höchsten einem geringeren Gute." Eifler, p. 374.

[41]That greed enslaves is expressed in the following "Sprüche": "Niemer der ze hêrren zimt,/ der sîn guot ze hêrren nimt." (56, 15f.) The poet's contempt for the vice of greed is vividly expressed by the pejorative terms "kneht" and "schalk" in the lines, "Swelch man ist des guotes kneht,/ der hât iemer schalkes reht." (56, 17f.)

[42]A similar thought is expressed in the following lines:

Dem kargen herzeleit geschiht,
so er geben muoz od geben siht:
sô ist des milten herzeleit,
swenne er ieman iht verseit. (91, 4ff.)

[43]Eifler, p. 377.

[44]Ibid., p. 387.

[45]Ibid., p. 388.

[46]DeBoor, II, 397.

[47]Des Minnesangs Frühling, ed. Carl von Kraus, 33rd ed. (Leipzig: S. Hirzel Verlag, 1964), p. 21. All quotations from the poetry of Herger and Spervogel will be taken from this edition of the text.

[48]Carl von Kraus, Des Minnesangs Frühling: Untersuchungen (Leipzig: S. Hirzel Verlag, 1939), p. 65.

[49]"Roethes Ansicht, daß die Gönner, die der Dichter 21-23 nennt, wegen des symbolischen Klanges als die Vertreter von hûs, gebe und stouf (Obdach, Kleidung und Nahrung, wie sie der Fahrende braucht) ausgewählt seien, findet Fernis (GRM. 25, 166) nicht unwahrscheinlich. Aber zu stouf = "Nahrung" hat schon Vogt ein berechtigtes Fragezeichen gesetzt." Ibid.

[50]Ibid., pp. 71-72; Bodo Mergell, "Zur zyklischen Form der Spruchdichtung Hergers," Mittelhochdeutsche Spruchdichtung, ed. Hugo Moser, Wege der Forschung, Vol. 154 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1972), p. 257.

[51]Spervogel's place in the chronology of Middle High German literature is the subject of disagreement, but it is probable, as DeBoor asserts, that the poet was a contemporary of Heinrich von Veldeke and Hartmann von Aue, and that he was perhaps a decade older than Walther. DeBoor, II, 397.

[52]Otto Ludwig, "Die Priameln Spervogels," Mittelhochdeutsche Spruchdichtung, p. 270.

[53]Ibid., p. 272.

[54]Ibid., p. 282.

[55]For a thorough and penetrating analysis of these poems, see Ludwig.

[56]Ludwig explains Spervogel's tendency to carefully disguise his pleas for reward - a tendency which contrasts sharply to Herger's direct and forceful requests for generous payment - in the following manner: "Mehrfach ist schon bemerkt worden, daß das Publikum Spervogels ein anderes war als das Hergers. 'Die Gesellschaft, vor der und für die Spervogel vorträgt, wirkt ritterlicher als Hergers Publikum.' Das legt den Gedanken nahe, daß es hauptsächlich Rücksichten gegenüber einer höfisch gebildeten Gesellschaft waren, die es Spervogel

verwehrten oder doch zumindest als unratsam erscheinen ließen, sein Begehren offen auszusprechen. Darauf deutet auch der . . . Spruch MF 21, 29. Denn einerseits ist in ihm die Verhüllung weiter als in den anderen Gehrsprüchen Spervogels getrieben, andererseits ist der höfische Einfluß hier am greifbarsten." Ibid., p. 286. The quotation within the quotation is taken from DeBoor, II, 398.

[57]Leonora Beirer, "Die Beziehungen Walthers von der Vogelweide zu Thomasin von Zerklaere," Diss. University of Innsbruck 1958, p. 130.

[58]In referring to and quoting from Walther's poetry, we will use Die Lieder Walthers von der Vogelweide, ed. Friedrich Maurer, 2nd ed., Altdeutsche Textbibliothek, Vol. 43 (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1960).

[59]Beirer, pp. 138-139.

[60]Ibid., p. 130.

[61]Ibid.

[62]Only Spervogel demands recognition and acknowledgement of his wisdom and experience, but he does so in a far more indirect manner than Walther. When he advises his audience to seek counsel from the wise (MF, 20, 15), he is subtly referring to himself: "Diese Aufforderung ist gewiß zunächst ganz allgemein zu verstehen. Sie gewinnt jedoch zugleich eine persönliche Note, wenn man bedenkt, daß die Sänger, insbesondere die Spruchdichter, oft Ratgeber ihrer Herren waren. Denn dann legt es sich nahe, in dem Spruch - trotz seiner allgemein gehaltenen Formulierung - eine geheime Aufforderung an einen Herrn oder Gönner des Dichters zu sehen, nicht auf andere, sondern nur auf den erfahrenen Dichter zu hören." Ludwig, p. 285.

[63]For historical background information related to this poem, see Beirer, pp. 134-135.

[64]Ibid., p. 135.

[65]Ibid.

[66]Friedrich Maurer, Die Politischen Lieder Walthers von der Vogelweide (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1964), p. 14.

[67]Reinmar's relationship to Walther is treated in detail by Gustav Roethe. For our purposes it is important to call attention to the following observations: "Walther befand sich, als er Reinmars Lehrer war . . . , schon in höherem Alter, und so erklärt es sich, dass in Reinmars Gedichten weniger die Minnedichtung des jungen Walther, als die didactisch-polemische Richtung des alten Meisters vertreten ist, die Reinmars dichterischer Eigenart obendrein viel

näher lag . . . . Ohne ihn [Walther] wäre Reinmar vielleicht nie auf die Bahnen gelangt, auf denen er sein Leben lang gewandelt ist. Als Walther, der adlige Sänger, die reflectierend-didactische Poesie, die bis dahin nur beim niedern bürgerlichen Fahrenden im Schwange war, in den Kreis seines Schaffens hereinzog, da durchbrach er geradezu ein Standesvorurteil; dass musste gefallen sein, bevor ein so wenig revolutionäre, so wenig selbständige Natur, wie Reinmar von Zweter, diesen Weg einschlagen konnte." Die Gedichte Reinmars von Zweter, ed. Gustav Roethe (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1967; rpt. of the 1887 Leipzig ed.), pp. 22-23.

[68]For information relating to Reinmar's place in the chronology of Middle High German literature, see Roethe, pp. 19-20 and DeBoor, II, 418.

[69]DeBoor, II, 418.

[70]Ibid., p. 420.

[71]Roethe, p. 23.

[72]All references to and quotations from Reinmar's poetry will be taken from Roethe's edition of the text.

[73]Roethe, p. 23.

[74]The same thought occurs in "Spruch" 163. Reinmar laments that the man devoid of virtue and honor grows richer, while the honorable man remains poor. He puts forth his solution to this deplorable situation:

Solt ich in beiden teilen guot,
ich rîchte den êrenrîchen, der sich vor schanden hât behuot,
der milte und tugende wielte, der zühte und êren waer volkomen gar.
Den tugendelôsen wolt ich swache spîsen . . . . (163, 4ff.)

[75]Roethe aptly summarizes the message of the poem from which these lines are taken: ". . . dass rechte Milte sich nicht erst drängen und bitten lässt". Roethe, p. 600.

[76]Ibid., p. 219.

[77]See also "Spruch" 118, 1ff:

Diu milte manegen hêrren hât,
ir knehte der weiz ich lützel: an mîn herze mir daz gât:
guot leben was bi ir knehten, nû ist di wîle bî ir hêrren lanc.

[78]See also "Spruch" 133. Here, too, Reinmar calls upon the Anti-Christ to come, since men at all levels of society have turned their backs to their Creator and sold themselves to greed:

dû vindest vürsten veile, veile grâven, vrîen, dienestman.
Kumst âne houbet, daz lâ sîn;
hâst in ze gebenne silber, golt, si werdent alle dîn:
an den si glouben solden, dâ kêrent si sich leider lützel an.
(133, 3ff.)

[79]For further details about the life of Bruder Wernher, see DeBoor, II, 418ff.

[80]All quotations from the poetry of Bruder Wernher are taken from Anton E. Schönbach, "Die Sprüche des Bruder Wernher," Beiträge zur Erklärung altdeutscher Dichtwerke, Drittes und Viertes Stück, Sitzungsberichte d. kaiserl. Akad. d. Wiss. in Wien, phil.-hist. Kl., Vol. 148, No. 7 and Vol. 150, No. 1 (Vienna: K.U.K. Hof- und Universitäts-Buchhandlung, 1904).

[81]Schönbach, Vol. 148, 41.

[82]Ibid.

[83]Ibid, p. 89.

[84]Ibid., Vol. 150, 92.

[85]Roethe, p. 218.

[86]Ibid., pp. 218-219.

[87]Udo Gerdes, Bruder Wernher: Beiträge zur Deutung seiner Sprüche, Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik, No. 97 (Göppingen: A. Kümmerle, 1973), p. 92. The quotation within the quotation is from Wernher's "Spruch" 59, line 11.

[88]Gerdes, p. 91.

[89]Ibid., pp. 90-91.

[90]In the following chapter we will briefly consider Berthold's definition of milte.

[91]Wernher's words call to mind the opening lines of Walther's "Reichston" as well as the concluding passage of Parzival:

swes leben sich sô verendet,
daz got niht wirt gepfendet
der sêle durch des lîbes schulde,
und der doch der werlde hulde

behalten kan mit werdekeit,
daz ist ein nützriu arbeit. (827, 19ff.)

All three poets are stating the essence of the highest courtly ideal. Thus it is erroneous to contend, as Gerdes does, that Wernher is speaking from a strictly religious perspective.

[92]Gerdes, p. 93.

[93]DeBoor, II, 421.

Chapter VI

[1]Shepard B. Clough, European Economic History: The Development of Western Civilization, 2nd ed. (New York: McGraw Hill, 1968), p. 79. For a detailed discussion of the economic stagnation in Western Europe prior to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, as well as of factors which led to a change in the situation, see pp. 70-79.

[2]DeBoor, III, 1, 5.

[3]The terms "natural economy" and "money economy" are clearly and accurately defined by the German economist Alfons Dopsch: "Bei der Naturalwirtschaft fehlt entweder der Tausch überhaupt, reine Naturalwirtschaft, oder es werden Waren unmittelbar gegen Waren getauscht (Naturaltausch). Die Geldwirtschaft hingegen ist grundsätzlich dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß der wirtschaftliche Verkehr mit Hilfe eines als allgemeines Äquivalentgut geltenden Umlaufsmittels, eines Geldes, vor sich geht." Alfons Dopsch, Naturalwirtschaft und Geldwirtschaft in der Weltgeschichte (Aalen: Scientia-Verlag, 1968; rpt. of the 1930 Vienna ed.), p. 1.

[4]Clough, p. 108.

[5]DeBoor, III, 1, 7.

[6]Ibid.

[7]Ibid., p. 9.

[8]As DeBoor observes, Rudolf was "politisch wie künstlerisch 'staufisch' bestimmt, stand in der Nachfolge der großen Generation der oberrheinischen Dichtung. Die Tatsache, daß Konrad IV. selber der Mäzen seines unvollendeten letzten Werkes, der Weltchronik, gewesen ist, zeigt uns, wie eng die Verbindung mit dem staufischen Hof gewesen ist." DeBoor, II, 176.

[9]Ibid, p. 177.

[10]The same idea is expressed in the message which Darius sends to his enemy Alexander:

"mir ist ouch me von dir geseit
daz dû dich grôzer werdekeit
vlîzest gegen den mînen
und in lâzest schînen
dicke milteclîchen muot
und in gebest rîchez guot." (6051ff.)

This passage shows that the giving of goods is not synonymous with but rather a manifestation of milte, which is an attitude ("muot"). This and all quotations from the text are taken from Rudolf von Ems,

Alexander, ed. Victor Junk (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1970; rpt. of the 1928-29 Leipzig ed.).

[11]All quotations from the text are taken from Rudolf von Ems, Der guote Gerhart, ed. John A. Asher, 2nd ed., Altdeutsche Textbibliothek, No. 56 (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1971).

[12]In the words of DeBoor, " . . . es ist nicht mehr 'der Hof', wo er sein Glück macht, es ist die Stadt. Nicht zufällig findet er seine Gönner in den aufstrebenden Bischofsstädten des Oberrheins mit ihrer wohlhabenden, kulturell aufgeschlossenen Oberschicht, in der sich aufstrebendes Kaufmannstum und stadtsässig gewordener Adel trafen, und zugleich mit einer reichen weltoffenen Geistlichkeit. Hier fand höfisch verfeinerte Lebensart und damit höfische Dichtung eine neue Heimstatt, nachdem die großen literarischen Höfe der Stauferzeit ihre Rolle ausgespielt und keine echte Nachfolge gefunden hatten." DeBoor, III, 1, 30.

[13]All quotations from the text are taken from Konrad von Würzburg, Engelhard, ed. Paul Gereke, 2nd ed. Ingo Reiffenstein, Altdeutsche Textbibliothek, No. 17 (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1963).

[14]All quotations from the text are taken from Konrad von Würzburg, Der Trojanische Krieg, ed. Adelbert von Keller (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1965; rpt. of the 1858 Stuttgart ed.).

[15]The same idea is found in "Spruch" 32, 166, in which the poet employs the "bîspel" of the hound and the donkey as a means of informing his audience that the poet of stature should be rewarded while the poet of inferior ability is to be shunned. References to Konrad's "Sprüche" are taken from Kleinere Dichtungen Konrads von Würzburg, ed. Edward Schröder (Berlin: Weidmann, 1959), III.

[16]This quotation from the text of Die Klage der Kunst is taken from the Schröder edition cited above.

[17]DeBoor, III, 1, 50.

[18]Ibid., p. 265.

[19]This and all quotations from the text are taken from Wernher der Gartenaere, Helmbrecht, ed. F. Panzer, 7th ed. Kurt Ruh, Altdeutsche Textbibliothek, No. 11 (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1965).

[20]Berthold von Regensburg, ed. Franz Pfeiffer, Deutsche Neudrucke; Reihe: Texte des Mittelalters (Berlin: Walter DeGruyter and Co., 1965; rpt. of the 1862 Vienna ed.), I, 257.

[21]Ibid.

[22]Ibid., p. 58.

[23]Ibid.

[24]Ibid., p. 107.

[25]Ibid., p. 20.

[26]Ibid., p. 106.

[27]"Der sehste morder, der ouch vil sêlen ermordet, dâ beschirme uns der almehtige got vor! wan der ist der aller wirsten einer. . . . Er heizet der gîtige." Ibid., pp. 135-136. See also Berthold's sermons Von Zwelf Scharn Hern Jôsuê and Von Siben Übergrôzen Sünden. In the former Berthold classifies greedy individuals as the final and most shameful group of sinners (p. 193). In the latter, greed is also treated as the seventh and worst evil: "Die sibenden die ouch den tiuvel kroenent aller naehest bî dem grunde der helle, daz sint die gîtigen liute." (p. 209)

[28]Heinrich defines milte as an attitude, as when he mentions "milter mût" as one means of gaining access to heaven (157, 30). Moreover, in "Spruch" 265 he defines milte as a mean state between two extremes, insisting that a nobleman who is excessively generous is not milte and declaring, "so ist dw herschafft gantz und vol,/ cham er also hengen und haben." (265, 60f.) But Heinrich also defines milte as the giving of alms (143, 20ff.); and he, like the "Spruchdichter" of the previous century, frequently speaks as laudator temporis acti, decrying the prevalence of greed in his times (145, 8ff.). Die Gedichte Heinrichs des Teichners, ed. Heinrich Niewöhner, Deutsche Texte des Mittelalters, Vol. 94 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1953), I.

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